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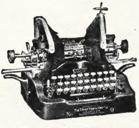

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ADVENTURE
Aug. 18th, 1920

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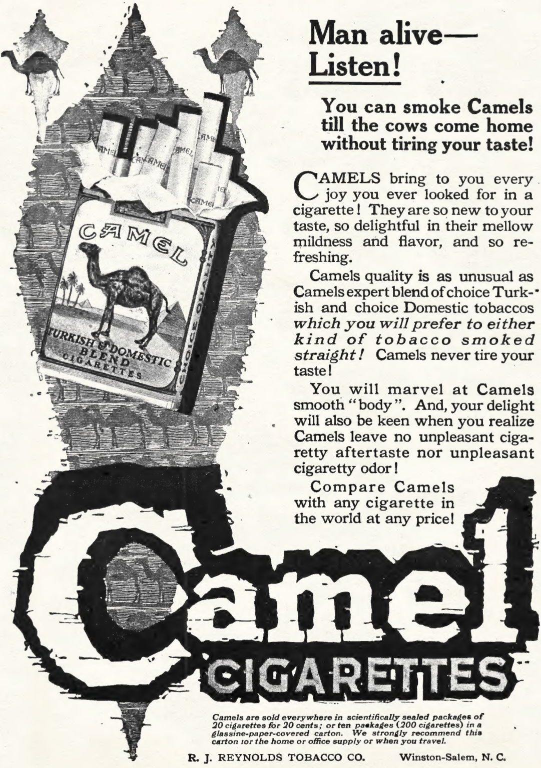

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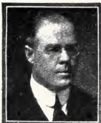
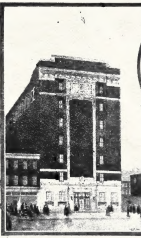


1497
McBRIDE'S
THEATRE TICKET OFFICE
1497

LEFT—*John McBride.* BELOW—*McBride's Theatre Ticket Office in Times Square, New York.*



*George H. Borst, and* (LEFT) *the Twentieth Century Storage Warehouse, Philadelphia.*

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Mid-August 1920
Vol-XXVI No-4
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**Occasionally one of our stories will be called an "Off the Trail" story, a warning that it is in some way different from the usual magazine stories, perhaps a little different, perhaps a good deal. It may violate a canon of literature or a custom of magazines, or merely be different from the type usually found in this magazine. The difference may lie in unusual theme, material, ending, or manner of telling. No question of relative merit is involved.*

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Adventure
Mid-August · 1920
Vol·XXVI No·4

# L'Atlantide

A Two-Part Story—Part I

by Pierre Benoit

INTRODUCTORY LETTER

HASSI-INIFEL NOVEMBER 8, 1903.

IF THE following pages are ever to see the light of day it will be because they have been stolen from me. The delay that I exact before they shall be disclosed assures me of that.

As to this disclosure, let no one distrust my aim when I prepare for it, when I insist upon it. You may believe me when I maintain that no pride of authorship binds me to these pages. Already I am too far removed from all such things. Only it is useless that others should enter upon the path from which I shall not return.

Four o'clock in the morning. Soon the sun will kindle the *hamada* with its pink fire. All about me the *bordj* is asleep. Through the half-open door of his room I hear André de Saint-Avit breathing quietly, very quietly.

In two days we shall start, he and I. We shall leave the *bordj*. We shall penetrate far down there to the south. The official orders came this morning.

Now, even if I wished to withdraw, it is too late. André and I asked for this mission. The authorization that I sought, together with him, has at this moment become an order. The hierarchic channels cleared, the pressure brought to bear at the ministry—and then to be afraid, to recoil before this adventure!

To be afraid, I said. I know that I am not afraid. One night in the Gurara when I found two of my sentinels slaughtered, with the shameful cross-cut of the Berbers slashed across their stomachs—then I was afraid. I know what fear is. Just so now, when I gazed into the black depth whence suddenly all at once the great red sun will rise, I know that it is not with fear that I tremble. I feel surging within me the sacred horror of this mystery and its irresistible attraction.

Delirious dreams, perhaps. The mad imaginings of a brain surcharged and an eye distraught by mirages. The day will come, doubtless, when I shall reread these pages with an indulgent smile, as a man of fifty is accustomed to smile when he rereads old letters.

Delirious dreams. Mad imaginings. But these dreams, these imaginings are dear to me.

"Captain de Saint-Avit and Lieutenant Ferrières," reads the official dispatch, "will proceed to Tasili to determine the statigraphic relation of Albien sandstone and carboniferous limestone. They will, in addition, profit by any opportunities of determining the possible change of attitude of the Axdiers toward our penetration," etc.

If the journey should indeed have to do only with such poor things I think that I should never undertake it.

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So I am longing for what I dread. I shall be dejected if I do not find myself in the presence of what makes me strangely fearful.

In the depths of the valley of Wadi Mia a jackal is barking. Now and again when a beam of moonlight breaks in a silver patch through the hollows of the heat-swollen clouds, making him think he sees the young sun, a turtle-dove moans among the palm-trees.

I hear a step outside. I lean out of the window. A shade clad in luminous black stuff glides over the hard-packed earth of the terrace of the fortification. A light shines in the electric blackness. A man has just lighted a cigaret. He crouches, facing southward. He is smoking.

It is Cegheir-ben-Cheikh, our Targa guide, the man who in three days is to lead us across the unknown plateaus of the mysterious Imoschaoch, across the *hamadas* of black stones, the great dried oases, the stretches of silver salt, the tawny hillocks, the flat gold dunes that are crested over, when the *alizé* blows, with a shimmering haze of pale sand.

Cegheir-ben-Cheikh. He is the man. There recurs to my mind Duveyrier's tragic phrase—

"At the very moment the colonel was putting his foot in the stirrup he was felled by a saber blow." *

Cegheir-ben-Cheikh! There he is, peacefully smoking his cigaret, a cigaret from the package that I gave him. May the Lord forgive me for it.

The lamp casts a yellow light on the paper. Strange fate, I never knew why, decided one day when I was a lad of sixteen that I should prepare myself for Saint-Cyr, and gave me there André de Saint-Avit as classmate. I might have studied law or medicine. Then I should be today a respectable inhabitant of a town with a church and running water, instead of this cotton-clad phantom, brooding with an unspeakable anxiety over this desert which is about to swallow me.

A great insect has flown in through the window. It buzzes, strikes against the rough cast, rebounds against the globe of the lamp and then, helpless, its wings singed by the still burning candle, drops on the white paper.

It is an African May-bug, big, black, with spots of livid gray.

I think of the others, its brothers in France, the golden-brown May-bugs which I have seen on stormy Summer evenings, protecting themselves, like little particles of the soil of my native countryside. It was there that as a child I spent my vacations and, later on, my leaves. On my last leave, through those same meadows, there wandered beside me a slight form, wearing a thin scarf because of the evening air, so cool back there.

But now this memory stirs me so slightly that I scarcely raise my eyes to that dark corner of my room where the light is dimly reflected by the glass of an indistinct portrait. I realize of how little consequence has become what had seemed at one time capable of filling all my life. This plaintive mystery is of no more interest to me. If the strolling singers of Rolla came to murmur their famous nostalgic airs under the window of this *bordj* I know that I should not listen to them and, if they became insistent, I should send them on their way.

What has been capable of causing this metamorphosis in me? A story, a legend perhaps, told at any rate by one on whom rests the direst of suspicions.

Cegheir-ben-Cheikh has finished his cigaret. I hear him returning with slow steps to his mat in barrack B to the left of the guard-post.

Our departure being scheduled for the tenth of November, the manuscript attached to this letter was begun on Sunday, the first, and finished on Thursday, the fifth of November, 1903.

Olivier Ferrières,
Lt. 3rd Spahis.

This letter together with the manuscript which accompanies it, the latter in a separate sealed envelope, was entrusted by Lieutenant Ferrières of the Spahis, the day of the departure of that officer for the Tasili of the Tuareg (Central Sahara), to Sergeant Chatelain. The sergeant was instructed to deliver it on his next leave to M. Leroux, Honorary Counsel at the Court of Appeals at Riom, and Lieutenant Ferrières' nearest relative. As this magistrate died suddenly before the expiration of the term of ten years set for the publication of the manuscript here presented, difficulties arose which have delayed its publication up to the present date.

---

* H. Duveyrier. "The Disaster of the Flatters Mission." Bull. Geól. Soc., 1881.

## CHAPTER I

### A SOUTHERN ASSIGNMENT

SUNDAY, the sixth of June, 1903, broke the monotony of the life that we were leading at the post of Hassi-Inifel by two events of unequal importance: The arrival of a letter from Mlle. de C—— and the latest numbers of the *Official Journal* of the French Republic.

"I have the lieutenant's permission?" said Sergeant Chatelain, beginning to glance through the magazines he had just removed from their wrappings.

I acquiesced with a nod, already completely absorbed in reading Mlle. de C——'s letter.

> When this reaches you mama and I will doubtless have left Paris for the country. If it be a consolation to imagine me as bored here as you possibly can be where you are, make the most of it. The Grand Prix is over. I played the horse you pointed out to me and, naturally, I lost.
>
> Last night we dined with the Martials de la Touche. Elias Chatrian was there—always amazingly young. I am sending you his last book, which has made quite a sensation. It seems that the Martials de la Touche are depicted there without disguise. I will add to it Bourget's last and Loti's and France's and two or three of the latest music-hall hits.
>
> In the political world they say the law about congregations will meet with strenuous opposition. Nothing much in the theaters. I have taken out a Summer subscription for *l' Illustration*. Would you care for it? In the country no one knows what to do. Always the same lot of idiots ready for tennis. I shall deserve no credit for writing to you often.
>
> Spare me your reflections concerning young Combemale. I am less than nothing of a feminist, having too much faith in those who tell me that I am pretty—yourself in particular. But indeed I grow wild at the idea that if I permitted myself half the familiarities with one of our lads that you surely have with your Oulèd-Naïls— Enough of that; it is too unpleasant an idea.

I had reached this point in the prose of this advanced young woman when a scandalized exclamation by the sergeant made me look up.

"Lieutenant!"

"Yes?"

"They are up to something at the ministry. See for yourself."

He handed me the *Official Journal*. I read:

"By a decision of the first of May, 1903, Captain de Saint-Avit (André), unattached, is assigned to the Third Spahis and appointed commandant of the post of Hassi-Inifel."

Chatelain's displeasure became fairly exuberant.

"Captain de Saint-Avit, commandant of the post. A post which has never had a slur upon it. They must take us for a dumping-ground."

My surprize was as great as the sergeant's. But just then I saw the evil, weasel-like face of Gourrut, the convict we used as clerk. He had stopped his scrawling and was listening with a sly interest.

"Sergeant, Captain de Saint-Avit is my ranking classmate," I answered dryly.

Chatelain saluted and left the room. I followed.

"There, there," I said, clapping him on the back, "no hard feelings. Remember that in an hour we are starting for the oasis. Have the cartridges ready. It is of the utmost importance to restock the larder."

I went back to the office and motioned Gourrut to go. Let alone, I finished Mlle. de C——'s letter very quickly and then reread the decision of the ministry, which gave the post a new chief.

It was now five months that I had enjoyed that distinction and, on my word, I had accepted the responsibility well enough and been very well pleased with the independence. I can even affirm without taking too much credit for myself that under my command discipline had been better maintained than under Captain Dieulivol, Saint-Avit's predecessor. A brave man, this Captain Dieulivol, a non-commissioned officer under Dodds and Duchesne, but subject to a terrible propensity for strong liquors, and too much inclined, when he had drunk, to confuse his dialects, and to talk to a Hausa in Sakalave.

No one, however, was ever more sparing of the post water-supply. One morning when he was preparing his absinth in the presence of the sergeant, Chatelain, noticing the captain's glass, saw with amazement that the green liquor was blanched by a far stronger admixture of water than usual. He looked up, aware that something abnormal had just occurred. Rigid, the carafe inverted in his hand, Captain Dieulivol was spilling the water, which was running over on the sugar. He was dead.

For six months since the disappearance of this sympathetic old tippler, the powers had not seemed to interest themselves in finding his successor. I had even hoped at times that a decision might be reached, investing me with the rights that I was in fact exercising. And today this surprizing appointment.

Captain de Saint-Avit. He was of my class at Saint-Cyr. I had lost track of him. Then my attention had been attracted to him by his rapid advancement, his decoration, the well-deserved recognition of three particularly daring expeditions of exploration to Tebesti and the Air, and, suddenly, the mysterious drama of his fourth expedition—that famous mission undertaken with Captain Morhange, from which only one of the explorers came back. Everything is forgotten quickly in France. That was at least six years ago. I had not heard Saint-Avit mentioned since. I had even supposed that he had left the army. And now I was to have him as my chief.

"After all, what's the difference?" I mused. "He or another. At school he was charming and we have had only the most pleasant relationships. Besides, I haven't enough yearly income to afford the rank of captain."

And I left the office, whistling as I went.

WE WERE now, Chatelain and I, our guns resting on the already cooling earth beside the pool that forms the center of the meager oasis, hidden behind a kind of hedge of *alfa*. The setting sun was reddening the stagnant ditches which irrigate the miserable garden-plots of the sedentary blacks.

Not a word during the approach. Not a word during the shoot. Chatelain was obviously sulking.

In silence we knocked down, one after the other, several of the miserable doves which came on dragging wings, heavy with the heat of the day, to quench their thirst at the thick green water. When a half-dozen slaughtered little bodies were lined up at our feet I put my hand on the sergeant's shoulder.

"Chatelain!"

He trembled.

"Chatelain, I was rude to you a little while ago. Don't be angry. It was the bad time before the siesta. The bad time of midday."

"The lieutenant is master here," he answered in a tone that was meant to be gruff, but which was only strained.

"Chatelain, don't be angry. You have something to say to me. You know what I mean."

"I don't know really. No, I don't know."

"Chatelain, Chatelain, why not be sensible? Tell me something about Captain de Saint-Avit."

"I know nothing." He spoke sharply.

"Nothing? Then what were you saying a little while ago?"

"Captain de Saint-Avit is a brave man." He muttered the words with his head still obstinately bent. "He went alone to Bilma, to the Air; quite alone to those places where no one had ever been. He is a brave man."

"He is a brave man undoubtedly," I answered with great restraint. "But he murdered his companion, Captain Morhange, did he not?"

The old sergeant trembled.

"He is a brave man," he persisted.

"Chatelain, you are a child. Are you afraid that I am going to repeat what you say to your new captain?"

I had touched him to the quick. He drew himself up.

"Sergeant Chatelain is afraid of no one, lieutenant. He has been at Abomey, against the Amazons, in a country where a black arm started out from every bush to seize your leg, while another cut it off for you with one blow of a cutlas."

"Then what they say, what you yourself——"

"That is talk."

"Talk which is repeated in France, Chatelain—everywhere."

He bent his head still lower without replying.

"Head of a donkey!" I burst out. "Will you speak?"

"Lieutenant, lieutenant," he fairly pleaded, "I swear that what I know, or nothing——"

"What you know you are going to tell me, and right away. If not, I give you my word of honor that for a month I shall not speak to you except on official business."

Hassi-Inifel: thirty native Arabs and four Europeans—myself, the sergeant, a corporal and Gourrut. The threat was terrible. It had its effect.

"All right then, lieutenant," he said with a great sigh. "But afterward you must not blame me for having told you things about a superior which should not be told and which come only from the talk I overheard at mess."

"Tell away."

"IT WAS in 1899. I was then mess sergeant at Sfax with the Fourth Spahis. I had a good record and besides, as I did not drink, the adjutant had assigned me to the officers' mess. It was a soft berth. The marketing, the accounts, recording the library books which were borrowed—there weren't many—and the key to the wine cupboard—for with that you can't trust orderlies. The colonel was young and dined at mess. One evening he came in late, looking perturbed, and, as soon as he was seated, called for silence:

" 'Gentlemen,' he said, 'I have a communication to make to you and I shall ask for your advice. Here is the question: Tomorrow morning the *City of Naples* lands at Sfax. Aboard her is Captain de Saint-Avit, recently assigned to Feriana, en route to his post.'

"The colonel paused.

" 'Good,' thought I; 'tomorrow's menu is about to be considered.'

"For you know the custom, lieutenant, which has existed ever since there have been any officers' clubs in Africa. When an officer is passing by his comrades go to meet him at the boat and invite him to remain with them for the length of his stay in port. He pays his score in news from home. On such occasions everything is of the best, even for a simple lieutenant. At Sfax an officer on a visit meant one extra course, vintage wine and old liqueurs.

"But this time I imagined from the looks the officers exchanged that perhaps the old stock would stay undisturbed in its cupboard.

" 'You have all, I think, heard of Captain de Saint-Avit, gentlemen, and the rumors about him. It is not for us to inquire into them. The promotion he has had, his decoration if you will, permits us to hope that they are without foundation. But between not suspecting an officer of being a criminal, and receiving him at our table as a comrade, there is a gulf that we are not obliged to bridge. That is the matter on which I ask your advice.'

"There was silence. The officers looked at each other, all of them suddenly quite grave, even to the merriest of the second lieutenants. In the corner, where I realized that they had forgotten me, I tried not to make the least sound that might recall my presence.

" 'We thank you, colonel,' one of the majors finally replied, 'for your courtesy in consulting us. All my comrades, I imagine, know to what terrible rumors you refer. If I may venture to say so, in Paris at the Army Geographical Service, where I was before coming here, most of the officers of the highest standing had an opinion on this unfortunate matter which they avoided stating but which cast no glory upon Captain de Saint-Avit.'

" 'I was at Bamaku at the time of the Morhange-Saint-Avit mission,' said a captain. 'The opinion of the officers there, I am sorry to say, differed very little from what the major describes. But I must add that they all admitted that they had nothing but suspicions to go upon. And suspicions are certainly not enough, considering the atrocity of the affair.'

" 'They are quite enough, gentlemen,' replied the colonel, 'to account for our hesitation. It is not a question of passing judgment, but no man can sit at our table as a matter of right. It is a privilege based on fraternal esteem. The only question is whether it is your decision to accord it to Saint-Avit.'

"So saying, he looked at the officers as if he were taking a roll-call. One after another they shook their heads.

" 'I see that we agree,' he said. 'But our task is unfortunately not yet over. The *City of Naples* will be in port tomorrow morning. The launch which meets the passengers leaves at eight o'clock. It will be necessary, gentlemen, for one of you to go aboard. Captain de Saint-Avit might be expecting to come to us. We certainly have no intention of inflicting upon him the humiliation of refusing him, which would be necessary if he presented himself in expectation of the customary reception. He must be prevented from coming. It will be wisest to make him understand that it is best for him to stay aboard.'

"The colonel looked at the officers again. They could not but agree. But how uncomfortable each one looked!

" 'I can not hope to find a volunteer among you for this kind of mission, so I am compelled to appoint some one. Captain Grandjean, Captain de Saint-Avit is also a captain. It is fitting that it be an officer of his own rank who carries him our message. Besides, you are the latest-comer here. Therefore it is to you that I entrust this painful interview. I do not need to suggest that you conduct it as diplomatically as possible.'

"Captain Grandjean bowed, while a sigh of relief escaped from all the others. As long as the colonel stayed in the room Grandjean remained apart, without speaking. It was only after the chief had departed that he let fall the words—

" 'There are some things that ought to count a great deal toward promotion.'

"The next day at luncheon every one was impatient for his return.

" 'Well?' demanded the colonel briefly.

"Captain Grandjean did not reply immediately. He sat down at the table where his comrades were mixing their drinks and he, a man notorious for his sobriety, drank, almost at a gulp, without waiting for the sugar to melt, a full glass of absinth.

" 'Well, captain?' repeated the colonel.

" 'Well, colonel, it is done. You may be at ease. He will not set foot on shore. But, ye gods, what an ordeal!'

"The officers did not dare speak. Only their looks expressed their anxious curiosity.

"Captain Grandjean poured himself a swallow of water.

" 'You see, I had got my speech all ready in the launch. But as I went up the ladder I knew that I had forgotten it. Saint-Avit was in the smoking-room with the captain of the boat. It seemed to me that I could never find the strength to tell him, when I saw him all ready to go ashore. He was in full-dress uniform, his saber lay on the bench and he was wearing spurs. No one wears spurs on shipboard. I presented myself and we exchanged several remarks, but I must have seemed somewhat strained, for from the first moment I knew that he sensed something.

" 'Under some pretext he left the captain and led me aft, near the great rudder-wheel. There I dared speak. Colonel, what did I say? How I must have stammered! He did not look at me. Leaning his elbows on the railing he let his eyes wander far off, smiling slightly. Then of a sudden, when I was well tangled up in explanations, he looked at me coolly and said:

" ' "I must thank you, my dear fellow, for having given yourself so much trouble. But it is quite unnecessary. I am out of sorts and have no intention of going ashore. At least I have the pleasure of having made your acquaintance. Since I can not profit by your hospitality, you must do me the favor of accepting mine as long as the launch stays by the vessel." '

" 'Then we went back to the smoking-room. He himself mixed the cocktails. He talked to me. We discovered that we had mutual acquaintances. Never shall I forget that face, that ironic and distant look, that sad and melodious voice. Ah, colonel—gentlemen—I don't know what they may say at the Geographic Office or in the posts of the Sudan. There can be nothing in it but a horrible suspicion. Such a man capable of such a crime— Believe me, it is not possible!'

"That is all, lieutenant," finished Chatelain after a silence. "I have never seen a sadder meal than that one. The officers hurried through lunch without a word being spoken, in an atmosphere of depression against which no one tried to struggle. And in this complete silence you could see them always furtively watching the *City of Naples* where she was dancing merrily in the breeze a league from shore.

"She was still there in the evening when they assembled for dinner, and it was not until a blast of the whistle, followed by curls of smoke escaping from the red and black smoke-stack, had announced the departure of the vessel for Gabes, that conversation was resumed, and even then less gaily than usual.

"After that, lieutenant, at the Officers' Club at Sfax they avoided like the plague any subject which risked leading the conversation back to Captain de Saint-Avit."

CHATELAIN had spoken almost in a whisper and the little people of the desert had not heard this singular history. It was an hour since we had fired our last cartridge. Around the pool the turtle-doves, once more reassured, were bathing their feathers. Mysterious great birds were flying under the darkening palm-trees. A less warm wind rocked the trembling black palm-branches. We had laid aside our helmets so that our temples could welcome the touch of the feeble breeze.

"Chatelain," I said, "it is time to go back to the *bordj*."

Slowly we picked up the dead doves. I felt the sergeant looking at me reproachfully, as if regretting that he had spoken. Yet during all the time that our return trip lasted I could not find the strength to break our desolate silence with a single word.

The night had almost fallen when we

arrived. The flag which surmounted the post was still visible, drooping on its standard, but already its colors were indistinguishable. To the west the sun had disappeared behind the dunes gashed against the black violet of the sky.

When we had crossed the gate of the fortifications Chatelain left me.

"I am going to the stables," he said.

I returned alone to that part of the fort where the billets for the Europeans and the stores of ammunition were located. An inexpressible sadness weighed upon me.

I thought of my comrades in French garrisons. At this hour they must be returning home to find awaiting them, spread out upon the bed, their dress uniforms, their braided tunics, their sparkling epaulets.

"Tomorrow," I said to myself, "I shall request a change of station."

The stairway of hard-packed earth was already black. But a few gleams of light still seemed palely prowling about the office when I entered.

A man was sitting at my desk, bending over the files of orders. His back was toward me. He did not hear me enter.

"Really, Gourrut, my lad, I beg you not to disturb yourself. Make yourself completely at home."

The man had risen and I saw him to be quite tall, slender and very pale.

"Lieutenant Ferrières, is it not?"

He advanced, holding out his hand.

"Captain de Saint-Avit! Delighted, my dear fellow."

At the same time Chatelain appeared on the threshold.

"Sergeant," said the newcomer, "I can not congratulate you on the little I have seen. There is not a camel-saddle which is not in want of buckles and they are rusty enough to suggest that it rains at Hassi-Inifel three hundred days in the year. Furthermore, where were you this afternoon? Among the four Frenchmen who compose the post, I found on my arrival only one convict, opposite a quart of *eau-de-vie*. We will change all that, I hope. At ease!"

"Captain," I said, and my voice was colorless, while Chatelain remained frozen at attention, "I must tell you that the sergeant was with me, that it is I who am responsible for his absence from the post, that he is an irreproachable non-commissioned officer from every point of view, and that if we had been warned of your arrival——"

"Evidently," he said with a coldly ironical smile. "Also, lieutenant, I have no intention of holding him responsible for the negligences which attach to your office. He is not obliged to know that the officer who abandons a post like Hassi-Inifel, if it is only for two hours, risks not finding much left on his return. The Chaamba brigands, my dear sir, love firearms, and for the sake of the sixty muskets in your racks I am sure they would not scruple to make an officer, whose otherwise excellent record is well known to me, account for his absence to a court-martial. Come with me, if you please. We will finish the little inspection I began too rapidly a little while ago."

He was already on the stairs. I followed in his footsteps. Chatelain closed the order of march. I heard the sergeant murmuring in a tone which may be imagined—

"Well, we are in for it now."

## CHAPTER II

### Captain de Saint-Avit

A FEW days sufficed to convince us that Chatelain's fears as to our official relations with the new chief were vain. Often I have thought that by the severity he showed at our first encounter Saint-Avit wished to create a formal barrier, to show us that he knew how to keep his head high in spite of the weight of his heavy past. Certain it is that the day after his arrival he showed himself in a very different light, even complimenting the sergeant on the upkeep of the post and the instruction of the men. To me he was charming.

"We are of the same class, aren't we?" he said to me. "I don't have to ask you to dispense with formalities; it is your right."

Vain marks of confidence, alas! False witnesses to a freedom of spirit, one in face of the other. What is more accessible in appearance than the immense Sahara, open to all those who are willing to be engulfed by it? Yet what is more secret? After six months of companionship, of communion of life such as only a post in the South offers, I ask myself if the most extraordinary of my adventures is not that I am leaving tomorrow toward unsounded solitudes with a man whose real thoughts are as unknown to me as these same solitudes for which he has succeeded in making me long.

The first surprize which was given me by this singular companion was occasioned by the baggage that followed him.

On his inopportune arrival alone from Wargla he had trusted to the *mehari* he rode only what can be carried without harm by such a delicate beast—his arms, saber and revolver, a heavy carbine and a very reduced pack. The rest did not arrive till fifteen days later, with the convoy which supplied the post.

Three cases of respectable dimensions were carried one after another to the captain's room and the grimaces of the porters said enough as to their weight.

I discreetly left Saint-Avit to his unpacking and began opening the mail which the convoy had sent me.

He turned to the office a little later and glanced at the several reviews which I had just received.

"So," he said; "you take these."

He skimmed through, as he spoke, the last number of the *Zeitschrift der Gesellschaft für Erdkunde in Berlin*.

"Yes," I answered. "These gentlemen are kind enough to interest themselves in my words on the geology of the Wadi Mia and the high Igharghar."

"That may be useful to me," he murmured, continuing to turn over the leaves.

"At your service."

"Thanks. I am afraid I have nothing to offer you in exchange, except Pliny perhaps. And still—you know what he said of Igharghar, according to King Juba. However, come help me put my traps in place and you will see whether anything appeals to you."

I accepted without further urging.

We commenced by unearthing various meteorological and astronomical instruments—the thermometers of Baudin, Salleron, Fastre; an aneroid, a Fortin barometer, chronometers, a sextant, an astronomical spy-glass, a compass glass. In short, what Duveyrier names as material that is simplest and easiest to transport on a camel.

As Saint-Avit handed them to me I arranged them on the only table in the room.

"Now," he announced to me, "there is nothing more but books. I will pass them to you. Pile them up in a corner until I can have a book-shelf made."

For two hours altogether I helped him to heap up a real library. And what a library! Such as a post in the South had never before seen. All the texts consecrated, under whatever titles, by antiquity to the regions of the Sahara were reunited between the four rough-cast walls of that little room of the *bordj*: Herodotus and Pliny naturally, and likewise Strabo and Ptolemy, Pomponius Mela and Ammianus Marcellinus. But besides these names, which reassured my ignorance a little, I perceived those of Corippus, of Paulus Orosius, of Eratosthenes, of Photius, of Diodorus of Sicily, of Solon, of Dion Cassius, of Isidor of Seville, of Martin de Tyre, of Ethicus, of Athenais; the "Scriptores Historiæ Augusti," the "Itinerarium Antonini Augusti," the "Geographi Latini Minores" of Riese, the "Geographi Græci Minores" of Karl Muller. Since, I have had the occasion to familiarize myself with Agatarchides of Cos and Artemidorus of Ephesus, but I admit that in this instance the presence of their dissertations in the saddle-bags of a captain of cavalry caused me some amazement.

I mention further the " Descrittione dell' Africa" by Leon l'African, the "Arabian Histories" of Ibn-Khaldoun, of Al-Iaqoub, of El-Bekri, of Ibn-Batoutah, of Mohammed El-Tounsi. I remember the names of only two volumes of contemporary French scholars. There were also the laborious theses of Berlioux[*] and of Schirmer.[†]

While I preceeded to make piles of as similar dimensions as possible I kept saying to myself:

"To think that I have been believing all this time that in his mission with Morhange, Saint-Avit was particularly concerned in scientific observations! Either my memory deceives me strangely or he is riding a horse of another color. What is sure is that there is nothing for me in the midst of all this chaos."

He must have read on my face the signs of too apparently expressed surprize, for he said in a tone in which I divined a tinge of defiance—

"The choice of these books surprizes you a bit?"

"I can't say it surprizes me," I replied, "since I don't know the nature of the work for which you have collected them. In any case I dare say, without fear of being contradicted, that never before has an officer of the Arabian office possessed a library in which the humanities were so well represented."

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[*] Doctrina Ptolemaei ab injuria recentiorum vindicata, sive Nilus superior et Niger verus, hodiernus Eghiren, ab antiquis explorati. Paris 8vo., 1874, with two maps. (Note by M. Leroux.)

[†] De nomine et genere popularum qui Berberi vulgo dicuntur. Paris, 8vo., 1892. (Note by M. Leroux.)

He smiled evasively and that day we pursued the subject no further.

AMONG Saint-Avit's books I had noticed a voluminous note-book secured by a strong lock. Several times I surprized him in the act of making notations in it. When for any reason he was called out of the room he placed this album carefully in a small cabinet of white wood, provided by the munificence of the administration.

When he was not writing and the office did not require his presence, he had the *mehari* which he had brought with him saddled and a few minutes later, from the terrace of the fortifications, I could see on the horizon the double silhouette disappearing with great strides behind a hummock of red earth.

Each time these trips lasted longer. From each he returned in a kind of exaltation which made me watch him with daily increasing disquietude during meal hours, the only time we passed quite alone together.

"Well," I said to myself one day when his remarks had been more lacking in sequence than usual, "it's no fun being aboard a submarine when the captain takes opium. What drug can this fellow be taking anyway?"

Next day I looked hurriedly through my comrade's drawers. This inspection, which I believed to be my duty, reassured me momentarily. "All very good," I thought, "provided he does not carry with him his capsules and his Pravaz syringe."

I was still in that stage where I could suppose that André's imagination needed artificial stimulants.

Meticulous observation undeceived me. There was nothing suspicious in this respect. Moreover, he rarely drank and almost never smoked.

Nevertheless there was no means of denying the increase of his disquieting feverishness. He returned from his expeditions each time with his eyes more brilliant. He was paler, more animated, more irritable.

One evening he left the post about six o'clock, at the end of the greatest heat of the day. We waited for him all night. My anxiety was all the stronger because quite recently caravans had brought tidings of bands of robbers in the neighborhood of the post.

At dawn he had not returned. It was not until midday that he came and then his camel collapsed under him, rather than knelt.

He realized that he must excuse himself but he waited till we were alone at lunch.

"I am so sorry to have caused you any anxiety, but the dunes were so beautiful under the moon! I let myself be carried farther and farther."

"I have no reproaches to make, dear fellow; you are free and the chief here. Only allow me to recall to you certain warnings concerning the Chaamba brigands and the misfortunes that might arise from a commandant of a post's absenting himself too long."

He smiled.

"I don't dislike such evidence of a good memory," he said simply.

He was in excellent, too excellent, spirits.

"Don't blame me. I set out for a short ride as usual. Then the moon rose. And then I recognized the country. It is just where, twenty years ago next November, Flatters followed the way to his destiny in an exaltation which the certainty of not returning made keener and more intense."

"Strange state of mind for the chief of an expedition," I murmured.

"Say nothing against Flatters. No man ever loved the desert as he did."

"Palat and Douls, among many others, have loved it as much," I answered. "But they were alone when they exposed themselves to it. Responsible only for their own lives, they were free. Flatters, on the other hand, was responsible for sixty lives. And you can not deny that he allowed his whole party to be massacred."

THE words were hardly past my lips before I regretted them. I thought of Chatelain's story, of the Officers' Club at Sfax where they avoided like the plague any kind of conversation which might lead their thoughts toward a certain Morhange-Saint-Avit mission.

Happily I observed that my companion was not listening. His brilliant eyes were far away.

"What was your first garrison?" he asked suddenly.

"Auxonne."

He gave an unnatural laugh.

"Auxonne. Province of the Côte d'Or. District of Dijon. Six thousand inhabitants. P. L. M. Railway. Drill school and review. The colonel's wife receives Thursdays, and the adjutant's on Saturdays. Leaves every Sunday—the first of the month to Paris, the three others to Dijon. That explains your judgment of Flatters.

"For my part, my dear fellow, my first garrison was at Boghar. I arrived there one morning in October, a second lieutenant, aged twenty, of the First African Battalion, the white chevron on my black sleeve—sun stripe, as the *bagnards* say in speaking of their grades.

Boghar! Two days before, from the bridge of the steamer, I had begun to see the shores of Africa. I pity all those who, when they see those pale cliffs for the first time, do not feel a great thrill in their hearts at the thought that this land prolongs itself thousands and thousands of leagues. I was little more than a child. I had plenty of money. I was ahead of schedule. I could have stopped three or four days at Algiers to amuse myself. Instead I took the train that same evening for Berrouaghia.

"There, scarcely a hundred kilometers from Algiers, the railway stopped. Going in a straight line you won't find another until you get to the Cape. The diligence travels at night on account of the heat. When we came to the hills I got out and walked beside the carriage, straining for the sensation, in this new atmosphere, of the kiss of the outlying desert.

"About midnight, at the camp of the Zouaves, a humble post on the road embankment overlooking a dry valley whence rose the feverish perfume of oleander, we changed horses. They had there a troop of convicts and impressed laborers on their way, under escort of riflemen and convoys, to the quarries in the South. In part, rogues in uniform from the jails of Algiers and Doucra—without arms, of course; the others were civilians—such civilians—this year's recruits, the young bullies of the Chapelle and the Goutte-d'Or.

"They left before we did. Then the diligence caught up with them. From a distance I saw in a pool of moonlight on the yellow road the black irregular mass of the convoy. Then I heard a weary dirge; the wretches were singing. One gave the stanza in a sad and guttural voice which trailed dismally through the depths of the blue ravines, and the others took up in chorus the horrible refrain—

*"A la Bastille, à la Bastille,*
*On aime bien, on aime bien*
*Nini, Peau d'Chien;*
*Elle est si belle et si gentille*
*A la Bastille.*

"I saw them all in contrast to myself when the diligence passed them. They were terrible. Under the hideous searchlight their eyes shone with a somber fire in their pale and shaven faces. The burning dust strangled their raucous voices in their throats. A frightful sadness took possession of me.

"When the diligence had left this fearful nightmare behind I regained my self-control.

" 'Farther, much farther south,' I exclaimed to myself, 'to the places untouched by this miserable bilgewater of civilization.'

"When I am weary, when I have a moment of anguish and longing to turn back on the road that I have chosen I think of the prisoners of Berrouaghia, and then I am glad to continue on my way.

"But what a reward, when I am in one of those places where the poor animals never think of fleeing because they have never seen man, where the desert stretches out around me so widely that the old world could crumble and never a single ripple on the dune, a single cloud in the white sky come to warn me."

"It is true," I murmured. "I, too, in the middle of the desert at Tidikelt, once felt that way."

UP TO that time I had let him enjoy his exaltation without interruption. I understand too late the error that I had made in pronouncing that unfortunate sentence.

His mocking, nervous laughter began anew.

"Ah! Indeed! At Tidikelt? I beg you, old man, in your own interest, if you don't want to make an ass of yourself avoid that species of reminiscence. Honestly you make me think of Fromentin, or that poor Maupassant, who talked of the desert because he had been to Djelfa—two days' journey from the street of Bab-Azound and the government buildings, four days from the Avenue de l'Opéra—and who, because he saw a poor devil of a camel dying near Bou-Saada, believed himself in the heart of the desert, on the old route of the caravans. Tidikelt, the desert!"

"It seems to me, however, that In-Salah—" I said, a little vexed.

"In-Salah? Tidikelt! But, my poor friend, the last time that I passed that way there were as many old newspapers and empty sardine boxes as if it had been Sunday in the forest of Vincennes."

Such a determined, such an evident, desire to annoy me made me forget my reserve.

"Evidently," I replied resentfully, "I have never been to——"

I stopped myself, but it was already too late.

He looked me squarely in the face.

"To where?" he said with good humor.

I did not answer.

"To where?" he repeated.

And as I remained mute—

"To Wadi Tarhit, do you mean?"

It was on the east bank of Wadi Tarhit, a hundred and twenty kilometers from Timissau, at 25.5 degrees north latitude, according to the official report, that Captain Morhange was buried.

"André!" I cried stupidly. "I swear to you——"

"What do you swear to me?"

"That I never meant——"

"To speak of Wadi Tarhit? Why? Why should you not speak to me of Wadi Tarhit?"

In answer to my supplicating silence he merely shrugged his shoulders.

"Idiot!" was all he said.

And he left me before I could think of even one word to say.

SO MUCH humility on my part had, however, not disarmed him. I had the proof of it the next day and the way he showed his humor was marked by an exhibition of wretchedly poor taste.

I was just out of bed when he came into my room.

"Can you tell me what the meaning of this is?" he demanded.

He had in his hand one of the official registers. In his crises of nervousness he always began sorting them over in the hope of finding some pretext for making himself militarily insupportable.

This time chance had favored him.

He opened the register. I blushed violently at seeing the poor proof of a photograph that I knew well.

"What is that?" he repeated disdainfully.

Too often I had surprized him in the act of regarding, none too kindly, the portrait of Mlle. de C —— which hung in my room not to be convinced at that moment that he was trying to pick a quarrel with me.

I controlled myself, however, and placed the poor little print in the drawer.

But my calmness did not pacify him.

"Henceforth," he said, "take care, I beg you, not to mix mementoes of your gallantry with the official papers."

He added, with a smile that spoke insult—

"It isn't necessary to furnish objects of excitation to Gourrut."

"André," I said, and I was white, "I demand——"

He stood up to the full height of his stature.

"Well what is it? A gallantry, nothing more. I have authorized you to speak of Wadi Tarhit, haven't I? Then I have the right, I should think——"

"André!"

Now he was looking maliciously at the wall, at the little portrait, the replica of which had just been subjected to this painful scene.

"There, there; I say, you aren't angry, are you? But between ourselves you will admit, will you not, that she is a little thin?"

And before I could find time to answer him he had left, humming the shameful refrain of the previous night:

*"A la Bastille, à la Bastille,*
*On aime bien, on aime bien,*
*Nini, Peau de Chien."*

For three days neither of us spoke to the other. My exasperation was too deep for words. Was I, then, to be held responsible for his avatars? Was it my fault if, between two phrases, there seemed always some allusion. . . .

"The situation is intolerable," I said to myself. "It can not last longer."

It was to cease very soon.

ONE week after the scene caused by the photograph the courier arrived. I had scarcely glanced at the index of the *Zeitschrift*, the German review of which I have already spoken, when

I started with uncontrollable amazement. I had just read:

*"Reise und Entdeckungen zwei französischer offiziere, Rittmeisters Morhange und Oberleutnants de Saint-Avit, in westlichen Sahara."*

At the same time I heard my comrade's voice.

"Anything interesting in this number?"

"No," I answered carelessly.

"Let's see."

I obeyed; what else was there to do?

It seemed to me that he grew paler as he ran over the index. However, his tone was altogether natural when he said—

"You will let me borrow it, of course?"

And he went out, casting me one defiant glance.

The day passed slowly. I did not see him again until evening. He was gay, very gay, and his gaiety hurt me.

When we had finished dinner we went out and leaned on the balustrade of the terrace. From there out swept the desert, which the darkness was already encroaching upon from the east.

André broke the silence.

"By the way, I have returned your review to you. You were right; it is not interesting."

His expression was one of supreme amusement.

"What is it? What is the matter with you anyway?"

"Nothing," I answered, my throat aching.

"Nothing? Shall I tell you what is the matter with you?"

I looked at him with an expression of supplication.

"Idiot," he found it necessary to repeat once more.

Night fell quickly. Only the southern slope of Wadi Mia was still yellow. Among the boulders a little jackal was running about, yapping sharply.

"The *dib* is making a fuss about nothing—bad business," said Saint-Avit.

He continued pitilessly—

"Then you aren't willing to say anything?"

I made a great effort to produce the following pitiful phrase:

"What an exhausting day! What a night—heavy, heavy— You don't feel like yourself; you don't know any more——"

"Yes," said the voice of Saint-Avit as from a distance, "a heavy, heavy night; as heavy, do you know, as when I killed Captain Morhange."

## CHAPTER III

### THE MORHANGE-SAINT-AVIT MISSION

"SO I killed Captain Morhange," André de Saint-Avit said to me the next day at the same time and in the same place, with a calm that took no account of the night, the frightful night I had just been through.

"Why do I tell you this? I don't know in the least. Because of the desert, perhaps. Are you a man capable of enduring the weight of that confidence and further, if necessary, of assuming the consequences it may bring? I don't know that, either. The future will decide. For the present there is only one thing certain: The fact, I tell you again, that I killed Captain Morhange.

"I killed him. And since you want me to specify the reason, you understand that I am not going to torture my brain to turn it into a romance for you, or commence by recounting, in the naturalistic manner, of what stuff my first trousers were made, or, as the neo-Catholics would have it, how often I went as a child to confession and how much I liked doing it. I have no taste for useless exhibitions. You will find that this recital begins strictly at the time when I met Morhange.

"And first of all, I tell you, however much it has cost my peace of mind and my reputation, that I do not regret having known him. In a word, apart from all question of false friendship, I am convicted of a black ingratitude in having killed him. It is to him, it is to his knowledge of rock inscriptions, that I owe the only thing that has raised my life in interest above the miserable little lives dragged out by my companions at Auxonne and elsewhere.

"This being understood," said André de Saint-Avit, "I will now continue with the facts.

IT WAS in the Arabian Office at Wargla, when I was a lieutenant, that I first heard the name Morhange. And I must add that it was for me the occasion of an attack of bad humor. We were having difficult times.

The hostility of the Sultan of Morocco

was latent. At Tuat, where the assassination of Flatters and of Frescaly had already been concocted, connivance was being given to the plots of our enemies. Tuat was the center of conspiracies, of razzias, of defections and at the same time the depot of supply for the insatiable nomads.

The Governors of Algeria—Tirman, Cambon and Laferrière—demanded its occupation. The Ministers of War tacitly agreed. But there was Parliament, which did nothing at all because of England, because of Germany and above all because of a certain "Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen," which prescribed that insurrection is the most sacred of duties, even when the insurgents are savages who cut your head off.

In short, the military authority could only, at its own discretion, increase the southern garrisons and establish new posts; this one had established Berresof, Hassi-el-Mia, Fort MacMahon, Fort Lallemand and Fort Miribel. But, as Castries puts it, you don't hold the nomads with *bordjs;* you hold them by the belt. The hotbed was the oasis of Tuat. Their honors, the lawyers of Paris, had to be convinced of the necessity of taking possession of the oasis of Tuat. The best way would have been to present them with a faithful picture of the plots that were being woven there against us.

The principal authors were, and still are, the Senussi, whose able chief has been forced by our arms to transfer the seat of his confederation over a thousand miles from there to Schimmedrou—in the Tibesti. They had—I say they through modesty—the idea of ascertaining the traces left by these agitators on their favorite places of concourse—Rhat, Temassinin, the plain of Adjemor and In-Salah. It was, you see, at least after leaving Temassinin, practically the same itinerary as that followed in 1864 by General Rohlfs.

I had already attracted some attention by two excursions, one to Agades and the other to Bilma, and was considered by the staff officers to be one of the best informed on the Senussi question. I was therefore selected to assume this new task.

I then suggested that it would be of interest to kill two birds with one stone and to get in passing an idea of the northern Ahaggar, so as to make sure whether the Tuaregs of Ahitarhen had continued to have as cordial relations with the Senussi as they had had when they combined to massacre the Flatters mission. I was immediately accorded the permission.

The change in my plan was as follows: After reaching Ighelaschem, six hundred kilometers south of Temassinin, I would penetrate between the high land of Muydir and Ahaggar and strike off to the southwest as far as Sheikh-Salah. There I would turn northward again toward In-Salah, by the road from the Sudan and Agades.

In all this would make hardly eight kilometers additional in a trip of about seven hundred leagues, with the certainty of making as complete an examination as possible of the roads which our enemies, the Senussi of Tibesti and the Tuareg of the Ahaggar, must follow to arrive at Tuat. On the way, for every explorer has his pet fancy, I was not at all displeased to think that I should have a chance to examine the geological formation of the plateau of Egele, about which Duveyrier and the others are so disappointingly vague.

EVERYTHING was ready for my departure from Wargla. Everything; which is to say, very little. Three camels: mine, my companion Bou-Djema's—a faithful Chaamba whom I had had with me in my wanderings through the Air; less of a guide in the country I was familiar with than a machine for saddling and unsaddling camels—then a third to carry provisions and skins of drinking-water—very little, since I had taken pains to locate the stops with reference to the wells.

Some people go equipped for this kind of expedition with a hundred regulars and even cannon. I am for the tradition of Douls and René Callie; I go alone.

I was at that perfect moment when only one thin thread still held me to the civilized world, when an official cable arrived at Wargla. It said briefly—

> Lieutenant de Saint-Avit will delay his departure until the arrival of Captain Morhange, who will accompany him on his expedition of exploration.

I was more than disappointed. I alone had conceived the idea of this expedition. I had had all the difficulties that you can imagine to make the authorities agree to it. And now, when I was rejoicing at the idea of the long hours I would spend alone with myself in the heart of the desert, they sent me a stranger and, to make matters worse, a superior.

The condolences of my comrades aggravated my bad humor.

The yearly report, consulted on the spot, had given them the following information:

> Morhange (Jean Marie François), class of 1881. Breveted. Captain, unassigned. (Topographical Service of the Army.)

"There is the explanation for you," said one. "They are sending one of their creatures to pull the chestnuts out of the fire after you have had all the trouble of making it. Breveted! That's a great way. The theories of Ardant du Picq or else nothing, about here."

"I don't altogether agree with you," said the major. "They knew in Parliament, for some one is always indiscreet, the real aim of Saint-Avit's mission: To force their hand for the occupation of Tuat. And this Morhange must be a man serving the interests of the army commission. All these people—secretaries, members of Parliament, governors—keep a close watch on each other. Some one will write an amusing paradoxical history some day of the French colonial expansion, which is made without the knowledge of the powers in office, when it is not actually in spite of them."

"Whatever the reason, the result will be the same," I said bitterly. "We will be two Frenchmen to spy on each other night and day along the roads to the south. An amiable prospect when one has none too much time to foil all the tricks of the natives. When does he arrive?"

"Day after tomorrow, probably. I have news of a convoy coming from Gardaia. It is likely that he will avail himself of it. The indications are that he doesn't know very much about traveling alone."

Captain Morhange did arrive, in fact, two days later by means of the convoy from Gardaia. I was the first person for whom he asked.

When he came to my room, whither I had withdrawn in dignity as soon as the convoy was sighted, I was disagreeably surprized to foresee that I would have great difficulty in preserving my prejudice against him.

He was tall, his face full and ruddy, with laughing blue eyes, a small black mustache and hair that was already white.

"I have a thousand apologies to make to you, my dear fellow," he said immediately with a frankness that I have never seen in any other man. "You must be furious with my importunity in upsetting your plans and delaying your departure."

"By no means, captain," I replied coolly.

"You really have only yourself to blame. It is on account of your knowledge of the southern routes, so highly esteemed at Paris, that I wished to have you to initiate me when the Ministries of Instruction and of Commerce and the Geographical Society combined to charge me with the mission which brings me here. These three honorable institutions have in fact entrusted me with the attempt to reestablish the ancient track of the caravans, which from the ninth century trafficked between Tunis and the Sudan, by Toweur, Wargla, Es-Souk and the bend of the Niger at Bourroum; and to study the possibility of restoring this route to its ancient splendor.

"At the same time, at the Geographic Bureau I heard of the journey that you are undertaking. From Wargla to Sheikh-Salah our two itineraries are the same, only I must admit to you that this is the first voyage of this kind that I have ever undertaken. I would not be afraid to hold forth for an hour on Arabian literature in the amphitheater of the School of Oriental Languages, but I know well enough that in the desert I should have to ask for directions as to whether to turn right or left.

"This is the only chance which could give me such an opportunity and at the same time put me under obligation for this introduction to so charming a companion. You must not blame me if I seized it, if I used all my influence to retard your departure from Wargla until the instant when I could join you.

"I have only one more word to add to what I have said; I am entrusted with a mission which, by its origin, is rendered essentially civilian. You are sent out by the Ministry of War. Up to the moment when, arrived at Sheikh-Salah, we turn our backs on each other to attain, you Tuat and I the Niger, all your recommendations, all your orders, will be followed by a subaltern and, I hope, by a friend as well."

All the time he was talking so openly I delightedly felt my worst fears melting away. Nevertheless, I still experienced a mean desire to show him some marks of reserve for having thus disposed of my company at a distance and without consulting me.

"I am very grateful to you, captain, for your extremely flattering words. When do you wish to leave Wargla?"

He made a gesture of complete detachment.

"Whenever you like. Tomorrow, this evening. I have already delayed you. Your preparations must already have been made for some time."

My little maneuver had turned against myself. I had not been counting on leaving before the following week.

"Tomorrow then, captain. But your luggage?"

He smiled delightfully.

"I thought it best to bring as little as possible—light pack and some papers. My brave camel had no difficulty in bringing it along. For the rest I depend on your advice and the resources of Wargla."

I WAS well caught. I had nothing further to say. And, moreover, such freedom of spirit and manner had already captivated me.

"It seems," said my comrades when the time for aperitives had brought us all together again, "that this captain of yours is a remarkably charming fellow."

"Remarkably."

"You surely can't have any trouble with him. It is only up to you to see that later on he doesn't get all the glory."

"We aren't working with the same end in view," I answered evasively.

I was thoughtful—only thoughtful, I give you my word. From that moment I harbored no further grudge against Morhange. Yet my silence persuaded him that I was unforgiving. And every one—do you hear me—every one—said later on when suspicions became rife:

"He is surely guilty. We saw them go off together. We can affirm it."

I am guilty. But for a low motive of jealousy? How sickening!

After that there was nothing to do but to flee, flee to the places where there are no more men who think and reason.

Morhange appeared, his arm resting on the major's. He was beaming over this new acquaintanceship.

He presented him enthusiastically:

"Captain Morhange, gentlemen. An officer of the old school, and a man after our own hearts, I give you my word. He wants to leave tomorrow, but we must give him such a reception that he will forget that idea before the time comes. Come, captain, you have at least eight days to give us."

"I am at the disposition of Lieutenant de Saint-Avit," replied Morhange with a quiet smile.

The conversation became general. The sound of glasses and laughter rang out. I heard my comrades in ecstasies over the stories that the newcomer poured out with never failing humor. And I, never, never have I felt so sad.

The time came to pass into the dining-room.

"At my right, captain!" cried the major, more and more beaming. "And I hope you will keep on giving us these new lines on Paris. We are not up with the times here, you know."

"Yours to command, major," said Morhange.

"Be seated, gentlemen."

The officers obeyed with a joyous clatter of moving chairs. I had not taken my eyes off Morhange, who was still standing.

"Major, gentlemen, you will allow me," he said.

And before sitting down at that table, where each moment he was the life of the party, in a low voice, with his eyes closed, Captain Morhange recited the *bénédicité*.

## CHAPTER IV

### TOWARD LATITUDE 25

"YOU see," said Captain Morhange to me fifteen days later, "you are much better informed about the ancient routes through the Sahara than you have been willing to let me suppose, since you know of the existence of the two Tadekkas. But the one of which you have just spoken is the Tadekka of Ibn-Batuta, located by this historian seventy days from Tuat and placed by Schirmer, very plausibly, in the unexplored territory of the Aouelimmiden. This is the Tadekka by which the Sonrahi caravans passed every year, traveling by Egypt.

"My Tadekka is different, the capital of the veiled people, placed by Ibn-Khaldûn twenty days south of Wargla, which he calls Tadmekka. It is toward this Tadmekka that I am headed. I must establish Tadmekka in the ruins of Es-Souk. The commercial trade route, which in the ninth century bound the Tunis to the bend the Niger makes at Bourroum, passed by Es-Souk. It is to study the possibility of reestablishing this ancient thoroughfare that the ministries gave me this mission, which has given me the pleasure of your companionship."

"You are probably in for a disappointment," I said. "Everything indicates that the commerce there is very slight."

"Well, I shall see," he answered composedly.

This was while we were following the unicolored banks of a salt lake. The great saline stretch shone pale blue under the rising sun. The legs of our five camels cast on it their moving shadows of a darker blue. For a moment the only inhabitant of these solitudes, a bird, a kind of indeterminate heron, rose and hung in the air, as if suspended from a thread, only to sink back to rest as soon as we had passed.

I led the way, selecting the route; Morhange followed. Enveloped in a burnoose, his head covered with the straight *chechia* of the Spahis, a great chaplet of alternate red and white beads, ending in a cross, around his neck, he realized perfectly the ideal of Father Lavigerie's White Fathers.

After a two-days' halt at Temassinin we had just left the road followed by Flatters and taken an oblique course to the south. I have the honor of having antedated Fourcau in demonstrating the importance of Temassinin as a suitable point for the passage of caravans and of selecting the place where Captain Pein has just now constructed a fort. Temassinin, the junction of the roads that lead to Tuat from Fezzan and Tibesti, is the future seat of a marvelous intelligence department. What I had collected there in two days concerning the disposition of our Senussi enemies was of importance. I noticed that Morhange let me proceed with my inquiries with complete indifference.

These two days he had passed in conversation with the old negro guardian of the *turbeh* which preserves under its plaster dome the remains of the venerated Sidi-Moussa. The confidences they exchanged, I am sorry to say, I have forgotten, but from the negro's amazed admiration I realized the ignorance in which I stood of the mysteries of the desert and how familiar they were to my companion.

And if you want to get an idea of the extraordinary originality which Morhange introduced into such surroundings, you who, after all, have a certain familiarity with the tropics, listen to this:

It was exactly two hundred kilometers from here in the vicinity of the Great Dune—that horrible stretch of six days without water. We had just enough for the two days we would have to travel before reaching the next well, and you know these wells. As Flatters wrote to his wife, "You have to work for hours before you can clean them out and succeed in watering beasts and men."

By chance we met a caravan which was going east toward Rhadames and which had come too far north. The camels' humps, shrunken and shaking, bespoke the sufferings of the troop. Behind came a little gray ass, a pitiful burro, its hoofs "interfering" at every step and lightened of its pack because the merchants knew that it was going to die. Instinctively, with its last strength, it followed, knowing that when it could no longer stagger the end would come and then the flutter of the vultures' wings.

I love animals, which I have solid reasons for preferring to men, but never should I have thought of doing what Morhange then did. I tell you that our water-skins were almost dry and that our own camels, without which one is lost in the empty desert, had not been watered for many hours. Morhange made his camel kneel, uncorked a skin and made the little ass drink. I certainly felt gratification at seeing the poor bare flanks of the miserable beast pant with satisfaction. But the responsibility was mine. Also I had seen Bou-Djema's aghast expression and the disapproval of the thirsty members of the caravan. I remarked on it. How it was received!

"What I have given," replied Morhange, "was my own. We will reach El-Biodh tomorrow evening about six o'clock. Between here and there I know that I shall not be thirsty."

He spoke in a tone, in which for the first time he allowed the authority of a captain to speak.

"That is easy to say," I thought ill-humoredly. "He knows that when he wants them my water-skin and Bou-Djema's are at his service."

But I did not yet know Morhange very well and it is true that until the evening of the next day, when we reached El-Biodh, refusing our offers with smiling determination, he drank nothing.

Shades of St. Francis of Assisi! Umbrian hills, so pure under the rising sun! It was in the light of a sunrise, by the border of a pale stream leaping in full cascades from a crescent-shaped niche in the gray rocks of Egele, that Morhange stopped. The unlooked-for waters rolled upon the sand and we saw, in the light which mirrored them, little black fish. Fish in the middle of the Sahara! All three of us were mute before this paradox of nature. One of them had strayed into a little channel of sand. He had to stay there, struggling in vain, his little white belly exposed to the air. Morhange picked him up, looked at him for a moment and put him back into the little stream. Shades of St. Francis! Umbrian hills— But I have sworn not to break the thread of the story by these untimely digressions.

"YOU see," Captain Morhange said to me a week later, "that I was right in advising you to go farther south before making for Sheikh-Salah. Something told me that this highland of Egele was not interesting from your point of view. While here you have only to stoop to pick up pebbles which will allow you to establish the volcanic origin of this region much more certainly than Bou-Derba, des Cloizeaux and Dr. Marrés have done."

This was while we were following the western pass of the Tidifest Mountains, about the twenty-fifth degree of northern latitude.

"I should indeed be ungrateful not to thank you," I said.

I shall always remember that instant. We had left our camels and were collecting fragments of the most characteristic rocks. Morhange employed himself with a discernment which spoke worlds for his knowledge of geology, a science he had often professed complete ignorance of.

Then I asked him the following question—

"May I prove my gratitude by making you a confession?"

He raised his head and looked at me.

"Well then, I don't see the practical value of this trip you have undertaken."

He smiled.

"Why not? To explore the old caravan route, to demonstrate that a connection has existed from the most ancient times between the Mediterranean world and the country of the blacks—that seems nothing in your eyes? The hope of settling once for all the secular disputes which have divided so many keen minds—d'Anville, Heeren, Berlioux, Quatremere on the one hand—on the other Gosselin, Walckenaer, Tissit, Vivien, de Saint-Martin—you think that that is devoid of interest? A plague upon you for being hard to please."

"I spoke of practical value," I said. "You won't deny that this controversy is only the affair of cabinet geographers and office explorers."

Morhange kept on smiling.

"Dear friend, don't snub me. Deign to recall that your mission was confided to you by the Ministry of War, while I hold mine on behalf of the Ministry of Public Instruction. A different origin justifies our different aims. It certainly explains, I readily concede that to you, why what I am in search of has no practical value."

"You are also authorized by the Ministry of Commerce," I replied, playing my next card. "By this chief you are instructed to study the possibility of restoring the old trade route of the ninth century. But on this point don't attempt to mislead me; with your knowledge of the history and geography of the Sahara, your mind must have been made up before you left Paris. The road from Djerid to the Niger is dead, stone dead. You knew that no important traffic would pass by this route before you undertook to study the possibility of restoring it."

Morhange looked at me full in the face.

"And if that should be so," he said with the most charming attitude, "if, as you say, I had the conviction before leaving, what do you conclude from that?"

"I should prefer to have you tell me."

"Simply, my dear boy, that I had less skill than you in finding the pretext for my voyage, that I furnished less good reasons for the true motives that brought me here."

"A pretext? I don't see——"

"Be sincere in your turn, if you please. I am sure that you have the greatest desire to inform the Arabian Office about the practises of the Senussi. But admit that the information that you will obtain is not the sole and innermost aim of your excursion. You are a geologist, my friend. You have found a chance to gratify your taste in this trip. No one would think of blaming you because you have known how to reconcile what is useful to your country and agreeable to yourself. But, for the love of —— don't deny it! I need no other proof than your presence here on this side of the Tidifest, a very curious place from a mineralogical point of view, but some hundred and fifty kilometers south of your official route."

It would not have been possible to counter me with better grace. I parried by attacking.

"Am I to conclude from all this that I do not know the real aims of your trip and that they have nothing to do with the official motives?"

I had gone a bit too far. I felt it from the seriousness with which Morhange's reply was delivered.

"No, my dear friend, you must not conclude just that. I should have no taste for a lie which was based on fraud toward the estimable constitutional bodies which have judged me worthy of their confidence and their support. The ends that they have assigned to me I shall do my best to attain. But I have no reason for hiding from you that there is another, quite personal, motive, which is far nearer to my heart. Let us say, if you will, to use a terminology that is otherwise deplorable, that this is the end while the others are the means."

"Would there be any indiscretion——"

"None," replied my companion. "Sheikh-Salah is only a few days distant. He whose first steps you have guided with such solicitude in the desert should have nothing hidden from you."

WE HAD halted in the valley of a little dry well where a few sickly plants were growing. A spring near by was circled by a crown of gray verdure. The camels had been unsaddled for the night and were seeking vainly at every stride to nibble the spiny tufts of *had*. The black and polished sides of the Tidifest Mountains rose almost vertically above our heads. Already the blue smoke of the fire on which Bou-Djema was cooking dinner rose through the motionless air.

Not a sound, not a breath. The smoke mounted straight, straight and slowly up the pale steps of the firmament.

"Have you ever heard of the 'Atlas of Christianity'?" asked Morhange.

"I think so. Isn't it a geographical work published by the Benedictines under the direction of a certain Dom Granger?"

"Your memory is correct," said Morhange. "Even so let me explain a little more fully some of the things you have not had as much reason as I to interest yourself in. The 'Atlas of Christianity' proposes to establish the boundaries of that great tide of Christianity through all the ages and for all parts of the globe—an undertaking worthy of the Benedictine learning, worthy of such a prodigy of erudition as Dom Granger himself."

"And it is these boundaries that you have come to determine here, no doubt," I murmured.

"Just so," replied my companion.

He was silent and I respected his silence, prepared by now to be astonished at nothing.

"It is not possible to give confidences by halves without being ridiculous," he continued after several minutes of meditation, speaking gravely in a voice which held no suggestion of that flashing humor which had a month before enchanted the young officers at Wargla. "I have begun on mine. I will tell you everything. Trust my discretion, however, and do not insist upon certain events of my private life.

"If, four years ago, I resolved to enter a monastery, it does not concern you to know my reasons. I can myself marvel that the passing from my life of a being absolutely devoid of interest should have sufficed to change the current of that life. I can marvel that a creature whose sole merit was her beauty should have been permitted by the Creator to swing my destiny to such an unforeseen direction. The monastery at whose doors I knocked had the most valid reasons for doubting the stability of my decision. What the world loses in such fashion it often calls back as readily.

"In short, I can not blame the abbot for having forbidden me to apply for my army discharge. By his instructions I asked for, and obtained, permission to be placed on the inactive list for three years. He knew that at the end of those three years of consecration it would be seen whether the world was definitely dead to your servant.

"The first day of my arrival at the cloister I was assigned to Dom Granger and by him placed at work on the 'Atlas of Christianity.' A brief examination decided him as to what kind of service I was best fitted to render. This is how I came to enter the studio devoted to the cartography of Northern Africa.

"I did not know one word of Arabic, but it happened that in the garrison at Lyon I had taken at the *Faculté des Lettres* a course with Berlioux, a very erudite geographer no doubt, but obsessed by one idea—the influence the Greek and Roman civilizations had exercised on Africa. This detail of my life was enough for Dom Granger. He provided me straightway with Berber vocabularies by Venture, by Delaporte and by Brosselard; with the 'Grammatical Sketch of the Temahaq' by Stanley Fleeman, and the '*Essai de Grammaire de la Langue Temachek*' by Major Hanoteau.

"At the end of the three months I was able to decipher any inscriptions in Tifinar. You know that Tifinar is the national writing of the Tuareg—the expression of this Terachek language which seems to us the most curious protest of the Targui race against its Mohammedan enemies.

"Dom Granger, in fact, believed that the Tuareg were Christians, dating from a period which it was necessary to ascertain but which coincided no doubt with the splendor of the church of Hippon. Even better than I, you know that the cross is with them the symbol of fate in decoration. Duveyrier has claimed that it figures in their alphabet, on their arms and among the designs of their clothes. The only tattooing that they wear on the forehead or on the back of the hand is a cross with four equal branches. The pommels of their saddles, the handles of their sabers and of their poniards are cross-shaped. And it is necessary to remind you that, although Islam forbids bells as a sign of Christianity, the harnesses of Tuareg camels are trimmed with bells.

"Neither Dom Granger nor I attach an exaggerated importance to such proofs, which resemble too much those which make such a display in the 'Genius of Christianity,' but it is indeed impossible to refuse all credence to certain theological arguments. Amanai, the god of the Tuareg, unquestionably the Adonai of the Bible, is unique. They have a hell, *timsi-tan-elakhaft*—the last fire—where reigns Iblis, our Lucifer. Their Paradise, where they are rewarded for good deeds, is inhabited by *andjelousen*—our angels. Do not urge the resemblance of this theology to the Koran, for I will meet you with historic arguments and remind you that the Tuareg have struggled all through the ages at the cost of partial extermination, to maintain their faith against the encroachments of Mohammedan fanaticism.

"Many times I have studied with Dom Granger that formidable epoch when the aborigines opposed the conquering Arabs. With him I have seen how the army of Sidi-Okba, one of the companions of the Prophet, invaded this desert to reduce the Tuareg tribes and impose on them Mussulman rule. These tribes were then rich and prosperous. They were the Ihbggaren, the Imededren, the Ouadelen, the Kel-Gueress, the Kel-Air. But internal quarrels sapped their strength.

"Still, it was not until after a long and cruel war that the Arabians succeeded in getting possession of the capital of the Berbers, which had proved such a redoubtable stronghold. They destroyed it after they had massacred the inhabitants. On the ruins Okba constructed a new city. This city is Es-Souk. The one that Sidi-Okba destroyed was the Berber Tadmekka. What Dom Granger asked of me was precisely that I should try to exhume from the ruins of the Mussulman Es-Souk the ruins of Tadmekka, which was Berber and perhaps Christian."

"I understand," I murmured.

"So far so good," said Morhange. "But what you must grasp now is the practical sense of these religious men, my masters. You remember that even after three years of monastic life they preserved their doubts as to the stability of my vocation. They found at the same time means of testing it once for all and of adapting official facilities to their particular purposes. One morning I was called before the father abbot and this is what he said to me in the presence of Dom Granger, who expressed silent approval:

" 'Your term of inactive service expires in fifteen days. You will return to Paris and apply at the Ministry to be reinstated. With what you have learned here and the relationships we have been able to maintain at headquarters, you will have no difficulty in being attached to the Geographical Staff of the army. When you reach the rue de Grenelle you will receive our instructions.'

"I was astonished at their confidence in my knowledge. When I was reestablished as captain again in the Geographical Service I understood. At the monastery the daily association with Dom Granger and his pupils had kept me constantly convinced of the inferiority of my knowledge. When I came in contact with my military brethren I realized the superiority of the instruction I had received.

"I did not have to concern myself with the details of my mission. The Ministries invited me to undertake it. My initiative asserted itself on only one occasion. When I learned that you were going to leave Wargla on the present expedition, having reason to distrust my practical qualifications as an explorer, I did my best to retard your departure so that I might join you. I hope that you have forgiven me by now."

THE light in the west was fading; the sun had already sunk into a matchless luxury of violet draperies. We were alone in this immensity, at the feet of the rigid black rocks. Nothing but ourselves. Nothing, nothing but ourselves.

I held out my hand to Morhange and he pressed it. Then he said:

"If they still seem infinitely long to me—the several thousand kilometers which separate me from the instant when, my task accomplished, I shall at last find oblivion in the cloister from the things for which I was not made—let me tell you this: The several hundred kilometers which still separate us from Sheikh-Salah seem to me infinitely short to traverse in your company."

On the pale silvery water of the little pool, motionless and fixed, a star had just been born.

"Sheikh-Salah," I murmured, my heart full of an indefinable sadness. "Patience, we are not there yet."

In truth, we were never to be there.

## CHAPTER V

### THE INSCRIPTION

WITH a blow of the tip of his cane Morhange knocked a fragment of rock from the black flank of the mountain.

"What is it?" he asked, holding it out to me.

"A basaltic peridot," I said.

"It can't be very interesting; you barely glanced at it."

"It is very interesting, on the contrary. But for the moment I admit that I am otherwise occupied."

"How?"

"Look this way a bit," I said, pointing toward the west to a black spot on the horizon across the white plain.

It was six o'clock in the morning. The sun had risen, but it could not be found in the surprizingly polished atmosphere. And not a breath of air, not a breath. Suddenly one of the camels called. An enormous antelope had just come in sight and had stopped in its flight, terrified, facing the wall of rock. It stayed there at a little distance from us, dazed, trembling on its slender legs.

Dou-Djema had rejoined us.

"When the legs of the *mohr* tremble it is because the firmament is shaken," he muttered.

"A storm?"

"Yes, a storm."

"And you find that alarming?"

I did not answer immediately. I was exchanging several brief words with Bou-Djema, who was occupied in soothing the camels, which were giving signs of being restive.

Morhange repeated his question. I shrugged my shoulders.

"Alarming? I don't know. I have never seen a storm on the Hoggar, but I distrust it. And the signs are that this is going to be a big one. See there already."

A slight dust had risen before the cliff. In the still air a few grains of sand had begun to whirl round and round with a speed which increased to dizziness, giving us in advance the spectacle in miniature of what would soon be breaking upon us.

With harsh cries a flock of wild geese appeared, flying low. They came out of the west.

"They are fleeing toward the Sebkha d'Amanghor," said Bou-Djema.

There could be no greater mistake, I thought.

Morhange looked at me curiously.

"What must we do?" he asked.

"Mount our camels immediately before they are completely demoralized and hurry to find shelter in some high place. Take account of our situation: It is easy to follow the bed of a stream, but within a quarter of an hour, perhaps, the storm will have burst. Within a half-hour a perfect torrent will be rushing here. On this soil, which is almost impermeable, rain will roll like a pail of water thrown on a bituminous pavement. Look at this."

I showed him, a dozen meters high, long hollow gouges, marks of former erosions on the rocky wall.

"In an hour the waters will reach that height. Those are the marks of the last inundation. Let us get started. There is not an instant to lose."

"All right," Morhange replied tranquilly.

We had the greatest difficulty to make the camels kneel, and when we had thrown ourselves into the saddle they started off at a pace which their terror rendered more and more disorderly.

Of a sudden the wind rose—a formidable wind—and almost at the same time the light was eclipsed in the ravine. Above our heads the sky had become, in the flash of an eye, darker than the walls of the cañon which we were descending at a breathless pace.

"A path—a stairway in the wall!" I screamed against the wind to my companions. "If we don't find one in a minute we are lost!"

They did not hear me, but, turning in my saddle, I saw that they had lost no distance, Morhange following me and Bou-Djema in the rear, driving the two baggage-camels masterfully before him.

A blinding streak of lightning rent the obscurity. A peal of thunder, reechoed to infinity by the rocky wall, rang out and immediately great tepid drops began to fall. In an instant our burnooses, which had been blown out behind by the speed with which we were traveling, were stuck tightly to our streaming bodies.

"SAVED!" I exclaimed suddenly.

Abruptly on our right a crevice opened in the midst of the wall. It was the almost perpendicular bed of a stream, an affluent of the one we had had the unfortunate idea of following that morning. Already a veritable torrent was gushing over it with a great uproar.

I have never better appreciated the incomparable surefootedness of camels in the most precipitous places. Bracing themselves, stretching out their great legs, balancing themselves among the rocks that were beginning to be swept loose, our camels accomplished at the moment what the mules of the Pyrenees might have failed in.

After several moments of superhuman effort we found ourselves at last out of danger on a kind of basaltic terrace elevated some fifty meters above the channel of the stream we had just left. Luck was with us; a little grotto opened out behind. Bou-Djema succeeded in sheltering the camels there, and from its threshold we had leisure to contemplate in silence the prodigious spectacle spread out before us.

You have, I believe, been at the camp at Châlons for artillery drills. You have seen, when the shell bursts, how the chalky soil of the Marne effervesces like the ink-wells at school when we used to throw a piece of calcium carbonate into them. Well, it was almost like that, but it was in the midst of the desert, in the midst of obscurity.

The white waters rushed into the depths of the black hole and rose and rose toward the pedestal on which we stood. And there was the uninterrupted noise of thunder and, still louder, the sound of whole walls of rock, undermined by the flood, collapsing in a heap and dissolving in a few seconds of time in the midst of the rising water which swirled upward.

All the time that this deluge lasted, one hour, perhaps two, Morhange and I stayed bending over this fantastic, foaming vat, anxious to see, to see everything, to see in spite of everything, rejoicing with a kind of ineffable horror when we felt the shelf of basalt on which we had taken refuge swaying beneath us from the battering impact of the water. I believe that never for an instant did we think, so beautiful it was, of wishing for the end of that gigantic nightmare.

Finally a ray of the sun shone through the cloud. Only then did we look at each other.

Morhange held out his hand.

"Thank you," he said simply, and added with a smile:

"To be drowned in the very middle of the Sahara would have been pretentious and ridiculous. You have saved us, thanks to your power of decision, from this very paradoxical end."

Ah! If only he had been thrown by a misstep of his camel and rolled to his death in the midst of the flood! Then what followed would never have happened. That is the thought that comes to me in hours of weakness, but I have told you that I pull myself out of it quickly. No, no, I do not regret. I can not regret that what happened did happen.

MORHANGE left me to go into the little grotto where Bou-Djema's camels were now resting comfortably. I stayed alone, watching the torrent which was continuously rising with the impetuous inrush of its unbridled tributaries. It had stopped raining. The sun shone from a sky that had renewed its blueness. I could feel the clothes that had a moment before been drenched, drying upon me with incredible quickness.

A hand was placed on my shoulder. Morhange was again beside me.

"Come here," he said.

Somewhat surprized, I followed him. We went into the grotto.

The opening, which was big enough to admit the camels, made it fairly light. Morhange led me up to the smooth face of rock opposite.

"Look," he said with unconcealed joy.

"What of it?"

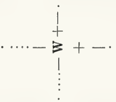
"Don't you see?"

"I see that there are several Tuareg inscriptions," I answered with some disappointment. "But I thought I had told you that I read Tifinar writing very badly. Are these writings more interesting than the others we have come upon before?"

"Look at this one," said Morhange. There was such an accent of triumph in his tone that this time I concentrated my attention.

I looked again.

The characters of the inscription were arranged in the form of a cross. It was designed with great regularity and the characters were cut deep into the rock. Although I knew little of rock inscriptions at that time, I had no difficulty in recognizing the antiquity of this one. This is a copy:



Morhange became more and more radiant as he regarded it.

I looked at him questioningly.

"Well, what have you to say now?" he asked.

"What do you want me to say? I tell you that I can barely read Tifinar."

"Shall I help you?" he suggested.

This course in Berber writing after the emotions through which we had just passed, seemed to me a little inopportune, but Morhange was so visibly delighted that I could not dash his joy.

"Very well then," began my companion, as much at his ease as if he had been before a blackboard; "what will strike you first about this inscription is its repetition in the form of a cross. That is to say that it contains the same word twice, top to bottom and right to left. The word which it composes had seven letters, so the fourth letter, ⋛, comes naturally in the middle. This arrangement, which is unique in Tifinar writing, is already remarkable enough, but there is better still. Now we will read it."

Getting it wrong three times out of seven I finally succeeded, with Morhange's help, in spelling the word.

"Have you got it?" asked Morhange when I had finished my task.

"Less than ever," I answered, a little put out; "a-n-t-i-n-h-a—Antinha. I don't know that word or anything like it in all the Saharan dialects I am familiar with."

Morhange rubbed his hands together. His satisfaction was boundless.

"You have said it. That is why the discovery is unique."

"Why?"

"There is really nothing, either in Berber or in Arabian, analogous to this word, so far as I know."

"Then?"

"Then, my dear friend, we are in the presence of a foreign word translated into Tifinar."

"And this word belongs, according to your theory, to what language?

"You must realize that the letter e does not exist in the Tifinar alphabet. It has here been replaced by the phonetic sign which is nearest to it—h. Restore e to the place which belongs to it in the word and you have——"

"Antinea."

"Antinea, precisely. We find ourselves before a Greek vocable reproduced in Tifinar I think that now you will agree with me that my find has a certain interest."

A LOUD cry, anguished, terrifying, rang out. That day we had no more conferences upon texts.

We rushed out to find a strange spectacle awaiting us.

Although the sky had cleared again, the

torrent of yellow water was still foaming and no one could predict when it would fall. In midstream, struggling desperately in the current, was an extraordinary mass, gray and soft and swaying.

But what at the first glance overwhelmed us with astonishment was to see Bou-Djema, usually so calm, at this moment apparently beside himself with frenzy, bounding through the gullies and over the rocks of the ledge in full pursuit of the shipwreck.

Of a sudden I seized Morhange by the arm. The grayish thing was alive. A pitiful long neck emerged from it and it uttered the heartrending cry of a beast in despair.

"The fool!" I cried. "He has let one of our beasts get loose and the stream is carrying it away!"

"You are mistaken," said Morhange. "Our camels are all in the cave. The one Bou-Djema is running after is not ours. And the cry of anguish we just heard—that was not Bou-Djema either. Bou-Djema is a brave Chaamba who has at this moment only one idea, to appropriate the intestate capital represented by this camel in the stream."

"Who gave that cry then?"

"Let us try, if you like, to explore up this stream that our guide is descending at such a rate."

And without waiting for my answer he had already set out through the recently washed gullies of the rocky bank.

At that moment it can be truly said that Morhange went to meet his destiny.

I followed him. We had the greatest difficulty in proceeding two or three hundred meters. Finally we saw at our feet a little rushing brook where the water was falling a trifle.

"See there!" exclaimed Morhange.

A blackish bundle was balancing on the waves of the creek.

When we had come up even with it we saw that it was a man in the long dark blue robes of the Tuareg.

"Give me your hand," said Morhange, "and brace yourself against a rock—hard!" Morhange was very, very strong. In an instant, as if it were child's play, he had brought the body ashore.

"He is still alive," he pronounced with satisfaction. "Now it is a question of getting him to the grotto. This is no place to resuscitate a drowning man."

He raised the body in his powerful arms.

"It is astonishing how little he weighs for a man of his height."

By the time we had retraced the way to the grotto the man's cotton clothes were almost dry. But the dye had run plentifully, and it was an indigo man that Morhange was trying to recall to life.

When I had made him swallow a few ounces of rum he opened his eyes, looked at the two of us with surprize, then, closing them again, murmured almost unintelligibly a phrase, the sense of which we did not get until some days later—

"Can it be that I have reached the end of my mission?"

"What mission is he talking about?" I said.

"Let him recover completely," responded Morhange. "You had better open some preserved food. With fellows of this build you don't have to observe the precautions prescribed for drowning Europeans."

He was indeed a species of giant whose life we had just saved. His face, although very thin, was regular, almost beautiful. He had a clear skin and little beard. His hair, already white, showed him to be a man of about sixty years.

When I placed a tin of corned beef before him a light of voracious joy came into his eyes. The tin contained an allowance for four persons. It was empty in a flash.

"Behold," said Morhange, "a robust appetite! Now we can put our questions without scruple."

Already the Targa had placed over his forehead and face the blue veil prescribed by the ritual. He must have been completely famished not to have performed this indispensable formality sooner. There was nothing visible now but the eyes watching us with a light that grew steadily more somber.

"French officers," he murmured at last.

And he took Morhange's hand and, after having placed it against his breast, carried it to his lips.

Suddenly an expression of anxiety passed over his face.

"And my *mehari?*" he asked.

I explained that our guide was then employed in trying to save his beast. He in turn told us how it had stumbled and fallen into the current and how he himself in trying to save it had been knocked over. His forehead had struck a rock. He had cried out. After that he remembered nothing more.

"What is your name?" I asked.

"Eg-Anteouen."

"What tribe do you belong to?"

"The tribe of Kel-Tahat."

"The Kel-Tahats are the serfs of the tribe of Kel-Rhela, the great nobles of Hoggar?"

"Yes," he answered, casting a side glance in my direction. It seemed that such precise questions on the affairs of Ahygar were not to his liking.

"The Kel-Tahats, if I am not mistaken, are established on the southwest flank of Atakor.* What were you doing when we saved your life, so far from your home territory?"

"I was going, by way of Tit, to In-Salah," he said.

"What were you going to do at In-Salah?"

He was about to reply, but we suddenly saw him tremble. His eyes were fixed on a point of the cavern. We looked to see what it was. He had just seen the inscription which had so delighted Morhange an hour before.

"Do you know that?" Morhange asked him with keen curiosity.

The Targa did not speak a word but his eyes had a strange light.

"Do you know that?" insisted Morhange, and he added, "Antinea?"

"Antinea," repeated the man; then he was silent.

"Why don't you answer the captain?" I called out, a strange feeling of rage sweeping over me.

The Targa looked at me. I thought that he was going to speak, but his eyes became suddenly hard. Under the lustrous veil I saw his features stiffening.

Morhange and I turned around.

On the threshold of the cavern, breathless, discomfited, harassed by an hour of vain pursuit, Bou-Djema had just appeared.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE DISASTER OF THE LETTUCE

As EG-ANTEOUEN and Bou-Djema came face to face I fancied that both the Targa and the Chaamba gave a sudden start which each immediately repressed. It was nothing more than a fleeting impression. Nevertheless it was enough to make me resolve that as soon as I was alone with our guide I would question him closely concerning our new companion.

The beginning of the day had been wearisome enough. We decided, therefore, to spend the rest of it there and even to pass the night in the cave, waiting till the flood had completely subsided.

In the morning, when I was marking our day's march upon the map, Morhange came toward me. I noticed that his manner was somewhat restrained.

"In three days we shall be at Sheikh-Salah," I said to him. "Perhaps by the evening of the second day, as badly as the camels go."

"Perhaps we shall separate before then," he muttered.

"How so?"

"You see I have changed my itinerary a little. I have given up the idea of going straight to Timissau. First I should like to make a little excursion into the interior of the Ahaggar range."

I frowned.

"What is this new idea?"

As I spoke I looked about for Eg-Anteouen, whom I had seen in conversation with Morhange the previous evening and several minutes before. He was quietly mending one of his sandals with a waxed thread supplied by Bou-Djema. He did not raise his head.

"It is simply," explained Morhange, less and less at his ease, "that this man tells me there are similar inscriptions in several caverns in western Ahaggar. These caves are near the road that he has to take in returning home. He must pass by Tit. Now the journey from Tit, by way of Silet, is hardly two hundred kilometers. It is a quasi-classic route,† as short again as the one that I shall have to take alone, after I leave you, from Sheikh-Salah to Timissau. That is in part, you see, the reason which has made me decide to——"

"In part? In very small part," I replied. "But is your mind absolutely made up?"

"It is," he answered me.

"When do you expect to leave me?"

"Today. The road which Eg-Anteouen proposes to take into Ahaggar crosses this one about four leagues from here. I have a favor to ask of you in this connection."

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* Another name, in the Temahaq language, for Ahaggar. (Note by M. Leroux.)

† The route and the stages from Tit to Timissau were actually plotted out, as early as 1888, by Captain Bissuel. *Les Tuareg de l'Ouest*, itineraries 1 and 10. (Note by M. Leroux.)

"Please tell me."

"It is to let me take one of the two baggage-camels, since my Targa has lost his."

"The camel which carries your baggage belongs to you as much as does your own *mehari*," I answered coldly.

We stood there several minutes without speaking. Morhange maintained an uneasy silence; I was examining my map. All over it in greater or less degree, but particularly toward the south, the unexplored portions of Ahaggar stood out in far too numerous white patches against the tan area of supposed mountains.

I finally said—

"You give me your word that when you have seen these famous grottoes, you will make straight for Timissau by Tit and Silet?"

He looked at me uncomprehendingly.

"Why do you ask that?"

"Because if you promise me that—provided, of course, that my company is not unwelcome to you—I will go with you. Either way I shall have two hundred kilometers to go. I shall strike for Sheikh-Salah from the south instead of from the west—that is the only difference."

Morhange looked at me with emotion.

"Why do you do this?" he murmured.

"My dear fellow," I said—it was the first time that I had addressed Morhange in this familiar way—"my dear fellow, I have a sense which becomes marvelously acute in the desert—the sense of danger. I gave you a slight proof of it yesterday morning at the coming of the storm. With all your knowledge of rock inscriptions you seem to me to have no very exact idea of what kind of place Ahaggar is, nor what may be in store for you there. On that account I should be just as well pleased not to let you run sure risks alone."

"I have a guide," he said with his admirable naïveté.

Eg-Anteouen, in the same squatting position, kept on patching his old slipper.

I took a step toward him.

"You heard what I said to the captain?"

"Yes," the Targa answered calmly.

"I am going with him. We leave you at Tit, to which place you must bring us. Where is the place you proposed to show the captain?"

"I did not propose to show it to him; it was his own idea," said the Targa coldly. "The grottoes with the inscriptions are three days' march southward in the mountains. At first the road is rather rough, but farther on it turns and you gain Timissau very easily. There are good wells where the Tuareg Taitoqs, who are friendly to the French, come to water their camels."

"And you know the road well?"

He shrugged his shoulders. His eyes had a scornful smile.

"I have taken it twenty times," he said.

"In that case let's get started."

We rode for two hours. I did not exchange a word with Morhange. I had a clear intuition of the folly we were committing in risking ourselves so unconcernedly in that least known and most dangerous part of the Sahara. Every blow which had been struck in the last twenty years to undermine the French advance had come from this redoubtable Ahaggar. But what of it? It was of my own will that I had joined in his mad scheme. No need of going over it again. What was the use of spoiling my action by a continual exhibition of disapproval?

I may as well admit furthermore that I rather liked the turn that our trip was beginning to take. I had at that instant the sensation of journeying toward something incredible, toward some tremendous adventure. You do not live with impunity for months and years as the guest of the desert. Sooner or later it has its way with you, annihilates the good officer, the timid executive, overthrows his solicitude for his responsibilities. What is there behind those mysterious rocks and those dim solitudes which have held at bay the most illustrious pursuers of mystery? You follow, I tell you, you follow.

"ARE you sure at least that this inscription is interesting enough to justify us in our undertaking?" I asked Morhange.

My companion started with pleasure. Ever since we began our journey I had realized that he feared that I was coming along half-heartedly. As soon as I offered him a chance to convince me, his scruples vanished and his triumph seemed assured to him.

"Never," he answered in a voice that he tried to control, but through which the enthusiasm rang out, "never has a Greek inscription been found so far south. The farthest points where they have been reported are in the south of Algeria and Cyrene. But in Ahaggar! Think of it! It is true that this one is translated into Tifinar, but this peculiarity does not diminish the interest of the coincidence; it increases it."

"What do you take to be the meaning of this word?"

"Antinea can only be a proper name," said Morhange. "To whom does it refer? I admit I don't know and the reason why at this very moment I am marching toward the south, dragging you along with me, is because I count on learning more about it. Its etymology? It hasn't one definitely, but there are thirty possibilities. Bear in mind that the Tifinar alphabet comes far from tallying with the Greek alphabet; that fact increases the number of hypotheses. Shall I suggest several?"

"I was just about to ask you to."

"To begin with, there is *anti* and *naus*—the woman who is placed opposite a vessel—an explanation which would have been pleasing to Gaffarel and to my venerated master Berlioux. That would apply well enough to the figureheads of ships. There is a technical term for this that I can not recall at this moment.[*]

"Then there is *antinea*, that you must relate to *anti* and *naos*—she who holds herself before the *naos*, the *naos* of the temple—she who is opposite the sanctuary—therefore priestess. An interpretation which would enchant Girard and Renan.

"Next we have *antinea*, from *anti* and *neos*, new, which can mean two things: either—she who is the contrary of young—which is to say old, or—she who is the enemy of novelty, or the enemy of youth.

"There is still another sense of *anti*—in exchange for—which is capable of complicating all the others I have mentioned; likewise there are four meanings for the verb *nea* which means in turn—to go, to flow, to thread or weave, to heap. There are more still. And notice, please, that I have not at my disposition on the otherwise commodious hump of this *mehari*, either the great dictionary of Estienne or the lexicons of Passow, of Pape, or of Liddel and Scott. This is only to show you, my dear friend, that epigraphy is but a relative science, always dependent on the discovery of a new text which contradicts the previous findings, when it is not merely at the mercy of the humors of the epigraphers and their pet conceptions of the universe."[†]

"That was rather my view of it," I said. "But I must admit my astonishment to find that with such a skeptical opinion of the goal you still do not hesitate to take risks which may be quite considerable."

Morhange smiled wanly.

"I do not interpret, my friend; I collect. From what I will take back to him, Dom Granger has the ability to draw conclusions which are beyond my slight knowledge. I was amusing myself a little. Pardon me."

Just then the girth of one of the baggage-camels, evidently not well fastened, came loose. Part of the load slipped and fell to the ground.

Eg-Anteouen descended instantly from his beast and helped Bou-Djema repair the damage.

When they had finished, I made my *mehari* walk beside Bou-Djema's.

"It will be better to resaddle the camels at the next stop. They will have to climb the mountain."

The guide looked at me with amazement. Up to that time I had thought it unnecessary to acquaint him with our new projects, but I supposed Eg-Anteouen would have told him.

"Lieutenant, the road across the white plain to Sheikh-Salah is not mountainous," said the Chaamba.

"We are not keeping to the road across the white plain. We are going south by Ahaggar."

"By Ahaggar," he murmured. "But——"

"But what?"

"I do not know the road."

"Eg-Anteouen is going to guide us."

"Eg-Anteouen!"

I watched Bou-Djema as he made this suppressed ejaculation. His eyes were fixed on the Targa with a mixture of stupor and fright.

Eg-Anteouen's camel was a dozen yards ahead of us, side by side with Morhange's. The two men were talking. I realized that Morhange must be conversing with Eg-Anteouen about the famous inscriptions, but we were not so far behind that they could not have overheard our words.

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[*] It is perhaps worth noting here that *Figures de Proues* is the exact title of a very remarkable collection of poems by Mme. Delarus-Mardrus. (Note by M. Leroux.)

[†] Captain Morhange seems to have forgotten in this enumeration, in places fanciful, the etymology of *anthinea*, a Doric dialect form of *'anthine*, from *'anthos*, a flower, and which would mean—which is in flower. (Note by M. Leroux.)

Again I looked at my guide. I saw that he was pale.

"What is it, Bou-Djema?" I asked in a low voice.

"Not here, lieutenant, not here," he muttered.

His teeth chattered. He added in a whisper:

"Not here. This evening, when we stop, when he turns to the east to pray, when the sun goes down—then call me to you. I will tell you. But not here. He is talking but he is listening. Go ahead. Join the captain."

"What next?" I murmured, pressing my camel's neck with my foot so as to make him overtake Morhange.

IT WAS about five o'clock when Eg-Anteouen, who was leading the way, came to a stop.

"Here it is," he said, getting down from his camel.

It was a beautiful and sinister place. To our left a fantastic wall of granite outlined its gray ribs against the sky. This wall was pierced from top to bottom by a winding corridor about a thousand feet high and scarcely wide enough in places to allow three camels to walk abreast.

"Here it is," repeated the Targa.

To the west, straight behind us, the track that we were leaving unrolled like a pale ribbon—the white plain, the road to Sheikh-Salah, the established halts, the well-known wells. And on the other side, this black wall against the mauve sky, this dark passage.

I looked at Morhange.

"We had better stop here," he said simply. "Eg-Anteouen advises us to take as much water here as we can carry."

With one accord we decided to spend the night there before undertaking the mountain.

There was a spring in a dark basin from which fell a little cascade; there were a few shrubs, a few plants.

Already the camels were browsing at the length of their tethers.

Bou-Djema arranged our camp dinner-service of tin cups and plates on a great flat stone. An opened tin of meat lay beside a plate of lettuce which he had just gathered from the moist earth around the spring. I could tell from the distracted manner in which he placed these objects upon the rock, how deep was his anxiety.

As he was bending toward me to hand me a plate, he pointed to the gloomy black corridor which we were about to enter.

"*Blad-el-Khouf!*" he murmured.

"What did he say?" asked Morhange, who had seen the gesture.

"*Blad-el-Khouf*—this is the country of fear. That is what the Arabs call Ahaggar."

Bou-Djema went a little distance off and sat down, leaving us to our dinner. Squatting on his heels, he began to eat a few lettuce leaves that he had kept for his own meal.

Eg-Anteouen was still motionless.

Suddenly the Targa rose. The sun in the west was no larger than a red brand. We saw Eg-Anteouen approach the fountain, spread his blue burnoose on the ground and kneel upon it.

"I did not suppose that the Tuareg were so observant of Mussulman tradition," said Morhange.

"Nor I," I replied thoughtfully.

But I had something to do that moment besides making such speculations.

"Bou-Djema!" I called.

At the same time I looked at Eg-Anteouen. Absorbed in his prayer, bowed toward the west, apparently he was paying no attention to me. As he prostrated himself I called again—

"Bou-Djema, come with me to my *mehari;* I want to get something out of the saddle-bags."

Still kneeling, Eg-Anteouen was mumbling his prayer slowly, composedly.

But Bou-Djema had not budged.

His only response was a deep moan.

Morhange and I leaped to our feet and ran to the guide. Eg-Anteouen reached him as soon as we did.

With his eyes closed and his limbs already cold, the Chaamba breathed a death-rattle in Morhange's arms. I had seized one of his hands. Eg-Anteouen took the other. Each in his own way was trying to divine, to understand.

Suddenly Eg-Anteouen leaped to his feet. He had just seen the poor embossed bowl which the Arab had held an instant before between his knees and which now lay overturned upon the ground.

He picked it up, looked quickly at one

after another of the leaves of lettuce remaining in it and then gave a hoarse exclamation.

"So," said Morhange, "it's his turn now; he is going to go mad."

Watching Eg-Anteouen closely, I saw him hasten without a word to the rock where our dinner was set; a second later he was again beside us, holding out the bowl of lettuce which he had not yet touched.

Then he took a thick, long, pale-green leaf from Bou-Djema's bowl and held it beside another leaf he had just taken from our bowl.

"*Afahlehle,*" was all he said.

I shuddered, and so did Morhange. It was the *afahlehle*, the *falestez*, of the Arabs of the Sahara, the terrible plant which had killed a part of the Flatters mission more quickly and surely than Tuareg arms.

Eg-Anteouen stood up. His tall silhouette was outlined blackly against the sky which suddenly had turned pale lilac. He was watching us.

We bent again over the unfortunate guide.

"*Afahlehle,*" the Targa repeated and shook his head.

Bou-Djema died in the middle of the night without having regained consciousness.

## CHAPTER VII

### THE COUNTRY OF FEAR

"IT IS curious," said Morhange, "to see how our expedition, uneventful since we left Wargla, is now becoming exciting."

He said this after kneeling for a moment in prayer before the painfully dug grave in which we had laid the guide.

I do not believe in God, but if anything can influence whatever powers there may be, whether of good or of evil, of light or of darkness, it is the prayer of such a man.

For two days we picked our way through a gigantic chaos of black rock in what might have been the country of the moon, so barren was it. No sound was heard save that of stones rolling under the feet of the camels and striking like gunshots at the foot of the precipices.

A strange march indeed. For the first few hours I tried to pick out by compass the route we were following, but my calculations were soon upset—doubtless a mistake due to the swaying motion of the camel. I put the compass back in one of my saddlebags. From that time on Eg-Anteouen was our master. We could only trust ourselves to him.

He went first, Morhange followed him and I brought up the rear. We passed at every step most curious specimens of volcanic rock, but I did not examine them. I was no longer interested in such things. Another kind of curiosity had taken possession of me. I had come to share Morhange's madness. If my companion had said to me: "We are doing a very rash thing. Let us go back to the known trails," I should have replied, "You are free to do as you please, but I am going on."

Toward evening of the second day we found ourselves at the foot of a black mountain whose jagged ramparts towered in profile seven thousand feet above our heads. It was an enormous shadowy fortress like the outline of a feudal stronghold silhouetted with incredible sharpness against the orange sky.

There was a well and about it several trees, the first we had seen since cutting into Ahaggar.

A group of men were standing about it. Their camels, tethered close by, were cropping a mouthful here and there.

At seeing us the men drew together, alert and on the defensive.

Eg-Anteouen turned to us and said—

"Eggali Tuareg."

We went toward them.

They were handsome men, those Eggali, the largest Tuareg whom I have ever seen. With unexpected swiftness they drew aside from the well, leaving it to us. Eg-Anteouen spoke a few words to them and they looked at Morhange and me with a curiosity bordering on fear but at any rate with respect.

I drew several little presents from my saddle-bags and was astonished at the reserve of the chief, who refused them. He seemed afraid even of my glance.

When they had gone I expressed my astonishment at this shyness for which my previous experiences with the tribes of the Sahara had not prepared me.

"They spoke with respect, even with fear," I said to Eg-Anteouen, "and yet the tribe of the Eggali is noble. And that of the Kel-Tahats, to which you tell me you belong, is a slave tribe."

A smile lighted the dark eyes of Eg-Anteouen.

"It is true," he said.

"Well then?"

"I told them that we three—the captain, you and I—were bound for the Mountain of the Evil Spirits."

With a gesture he indicated the black mountain.

"They are afraid. All the Tuareg of Ahaggar are afraid of the Mountain of the Evil Spirits. You saw how they were up and off at the very mention of its name."

"It is to the Mountain of Evil Spirits that you are taking us?" queried Morhange.

"Yes," replied the Targa; "that is where the inscriptions are that I told you about."

"You did not mention that detail to us."

"Why should I? The Tuareg are afraid of the *ilhinen*—spirits with horns and tails, covered with hair—who make the cattle sicken and die and cast spells over men. But I know well that the Christians are not afraid and even laugh at the fears of the Tuareg."

"And you?" I asked. "You are a Targa and you are not afraid of the *ilhinen?*"

Eg-Anteouen showed a little red leather bag hung about his neck on a chain of white seeds.

"I have my amulet," he replied gravely, "blessed by the venerable Sidi-Moussa himself. And then I am with you. You saved my life. You have desired to see the inscriptions. The will of Allah be done!"

As he finished speaking he squatted on his heels, drew out his long reed pipe and began to smoke gravely.

"All this is beginning to seem very strange," said Morhange, coming over to me.

"You can say that without exaggeration," I replied. "You remember as well as I the passage in which Barth tells of his expedition to the Idinen, the Mountain of the Evil Spirits of the Azdier Tuareg. The region had so evil a reputation that no Targa would go with him. But he got back."

"Yes, he got back," replied my comrade, "but only after he had been lost. Without water or food he came so near dying of hunger and thirst that he had to open a vein and drink his own blood. The prospect is not particularly attractive."

I shrugged my shoulders. After all it was not my fault that we were there.

Morhange understood my gesture and thought it necessary to make excuses.

"I should be curious," he went on with rather forced gaiety, "to meet these spirits and substantiate the facts of Pomponius Mela, who knew them and locates them, in fact, in the mountain of the Tuareg. He calls them egipans, blemyens, gamphasantes, satyrs. 'The gamphasantes,' he says, 'are naked. The blemyens have no head and their faces are placed on their chests; the satyrs have nothing like men except faces. The egipans are made as is commonly described.' Satyrs, egipans—isn't it very strange to find Greek names given to the barbarian spirits of this region? Believe me, we are on a curious trail. I am sure that Antinea will be our key to remarkable discoveries."

"Listen!" I said, laying a finger on my lips.

Strange sounds rose from about us at the evening advanced with great strides. A kind of crackling followed by long rending shrieks echoed and reechoed to infinity in the neighboring ravines. It seemed to me that the whole black mountain had suddenly begun to moan.

We looked at Eg-Anteouen. He was smoking on, not a muscle twitching.

"The *ilhinen* are waking up," he said simply.

Morhange listened without saying a word. Doubtless he understood as I did—the overheated rocks, the crackling of the stone, a whole series of physical phenomena, the example of the singing statue of Memnon. But for all that this unexpected concert reacted no less painfully on our overstrained nerves.

The last words of poor Bou-Djema came to my mind.

"The country of fear," I murmured in a low voice.

And Morhange repeated—

"The country of fear."

The strange concert ceased as the first stars appeared in the sky. With deep emotion we watched the tiny bluish flames appear, one after another. At that portentous moment they seemed to span the distance between us—isolated, condemned, lost—and our brothers of higher latitudes, who at that hour were rushing about their poor pleasures with delirious frenzy, in cities where the whiteness of electric lamps came on in a burst.

*Chêt-Ahadh essa hettîsenet*
*Mâteredjrê d-Erredjeâot.*
*Mâtesekek d-Essekâot,*
*Mâtelahrlahr d'Ellerhâot,*
*Ettâs djenen, barâd tit-ennit abâtet.*

Eg-Anteouen's voice raised itself in slow guttural tones. It resounded with sad, grave majesty in the silence now complete.

I touched the Targa's arm. With a movement of his head he pointed to a constellation glittering in the firmament.

"The Pleiades," I murmured to Morhange, showing him the seven pale stars, while Eg-Anteouen took up his mournful song in the same monotone:

"The daughters of the Night are seven:
Mâteredjrê and Erredjeâot,
Mâtesekek and Essekâot,
Mâtelahrlahr and Ellerhâot.
The seventh is a boy, one of whose eyes has flown away."

A sudden sickness came over me. I seized the Targa's arm as he was starting to intone his refrain for the third time.

"When will we reach this cave with the inscriptions?" I asked bruskly.

He looked at me and replied with his usual calm—

"We are there."

"We are there! Then why don't you show it to us?"

"You did not ask me," he replied, not without a touch of insolence.

Morhange had jumped to his feet.

"The cave is here?"

"It is here," Eg-Anteouen replied slowly, rising to his feet.

"Take us to it."

"Morhange," I said, suddenly anxious, "night is falling. We will see nothing, and perhaps it is still some way off."

"It is hardly five hundred paces," Eg-Anteouen replied. "The cave is full of dead underbrush. We will set it on fire and the captain will see as in full daylight."

"Come," my comrade repeated.

"And the camels?" I hazarded.

"They are tethered," said Eg-Anteouen, "and we shall not be gone long."

He had started toward the black mountain. Morhange, trembling with excitement, followed. I followed, too, the victim of profound uneasiness. My pulses throbbed.

"I am not afraid," I kept repeating to myself. "I swear that this is not fear."

And really it was not fear. Yet what a strange dizziness! There was a mist over my eyes. My ears buzzed. Again I heard Eg-Anteouen's voice, but multiplied, immense and at the same time very low.

"The Daughters of the Night are seven——"

It seemed to me that the voice of the mountain, reechoing, repeated that sinister last line to infinity.

"And the seventh is a boy, one of whose eyes has flown away."

"THERE it is," said the Targa.

A black hole in the wall opened up. Bending over, Eg-Anteouen entered. We followed him. The darkness closed around us.

A yellow flame—Eg-Anteouen had struck his flint. He set fire to a pile of brush near the surface. At first we could see nothing. The smoke blinded us.

Eg-Anteouen stayed at one side of the opening of the cave. He was seated and, more inscrutable than ever, had begun again to blow great puffs of gray smoke from his pipe.

The burning brush cast a flickering light. I caught a glimpse of Morhange. He seemed very pale. With both hands braced against the wall, he was working to decipher a mass of signs which I could scarcely distinguish. Nevertheless I thought I could see his hands trembling.

"The devil," I thought, finding it more and more difficult to coordinate my thoughts; "he seems to be as unstrung as I."

I heard him call out to Eg-Anteouen in what seemed to me a loud voice:

"Stand to one side. Let the air in. What a smoke!"

He kept on working at the signs.

Suddenly I heard him again, but with difficulty. It seemed as if even sounds were confused in the smoke.

"Antinea—at last—Antinea. But not cut in the rock—the marks traced in ocher—not ten years old, perhaps not five. Oh!"

He pressed his hands to his head. Again he cried out:

"It is a mystery! A tragic mystery!"

I laughed teasingly.

"Come on, come on. Don't get excited over it."

He took me by the arm and shook me. I saw his eyes big with terror and astonishment.

"Are you mad?" he yelled in my face.

"Not so loud," I replied with the same little laugh.

He looked at me again and sank down, overcome, on a rock opposite me. Eg-Anteouen was still smoking placidly at the mouth of the cave. We could see the red circle of his pipe glowing in the darkness.

"Madman! Madman!" repeated Morhange. His voice seemed to stick in his throat.

Suddenly he bent over the brush which was giving its last darts of flame, high and clear. He picked out a branch which had not yet caught. I saw him examine it carefully, then throw it back in the fire with a loud laugh.

"Ha! Ha! That's good, all right!"

He staggered toward Eg-Anteouen, pointing to the fire.

"It's hemp. Hashish, hashish! Oh, that's a good one, all right."

"Yes, it's a good one," I repeated, bursting into laughter.

Eg-Anteouen quietly smiled approval. The dying fire lit his inscrutable face and flickered in his terrible dark eyes.

A moment passed. Suddenly Morhange seized the Targa's arm.

"I want to smoke, too," he said. "Give me a pipe."

The specter gave him one.

"What! A European pipe?"

"A European pipe," I repeated, feeling gayer and gayer.

"With an initial—M! As if made on purpose. M.—Captain Morhange."

"Masson," corrected Eg-Anteouen quietly.

"Captain Masson!" I repeated in concert with Morhange.

We laughed again.

"Ha! Ha! Ha! Captain Masson—Colonel Flatters—the well of Garama. They killed him to take his pipe—that pipe. It was Cegheir-Cheikh who killed Captain Masson."

"It was Cegheir-ben-Cheikh," repeated the Targa with imperturbable calm.

"Captain Masson and Colonel Flatters had left the convoy to look for the well," said Morhange, laughing.

"It was then that the Tuareg attacked them," I finished, laughing as hard as I could.

"A Targa of Ahaggar seized the bridle of Captain Masson's horse," said Morhange.

"Cegheir-ben-Cheikh had hold of Colonel Flatters' bridle," put in Eg-Anteouen.

"The colonel puts his foot in the stirrup and receives a cut from Cegheir-ben-Cheikh's saber," I said.

"Captain Masson draws his revolver and fires on Cegheir-ben-Cheikh, shooting off three fingers of his left hand," said Morhange.

"But," finished Eg-Anteouen imperturbably, "but Cegheir-ben-Cheikh, with one blow of his saber, splits Captain Masson's skull."

He gave a silent, satisfied laugh as he spoke. The dying flame lit up his face. We saw the gleaming black stem of his pipe. He held it in his left hand. One finger—no, two fingers only on that hand. Hello! I had not noticed that before.

Morhange also noticed it, for he finished with a loud laugh.

"Then, after splitting his skull, you robbed him. You took his pipe from him. Bravo, Cegheir-ben-Cheikh!"

CEGHEIR-BEN-CHEIKH does not reply, but I can see how satisfied with himself he is. He keeps on smoking. I can hardly see his features now. The firelight pales, dies. I have never laughed so much as this evening. I am sure Morhange never has, either. Perhaps he will forget the cloister. And all because Cegheir-ben-Cheikh stole Captain Masson's pipe.

Again that accursed song. "The seventh is a boy, one of whose eyes has flown away." One can not imagine more senseless words. It is very strange, really. There seem to be four of us in this cave now. Four, I say, five, six, seven, eight. Make yourselves at home, my friends. What! There are no more of you? I am going to find out at last how the spirits of this region are made, the gamphasantes, the blemyens. Morhange says that the blemyens have their faces on the middle of their chests. Surely this one who is seizing me in his arms is not a blemyen! Now he is carrying me outside. And Morhange—I do not want them to forget Morhange.

They did not forget him; I see him perched on a camel in front of that one to which I am fastened. They did well to fasten me, for otherwise I surely would tumble off. These spirits certainly are not bad fellows. But what a long way it is! I want to stretch out—to sleep. A while ago we surely were following a long passage; then we were in the open air. Now we are again in an endless stifling corridor. Here are the stars again. Is this ridiculous course going to keep on?

Hello! Lights! Stars perhaps. No, lights, I say. A stairway, on my word—of rocks to be sure, but still a stairway. How can the camels— But it is no longer a camel; this is a man carrying me—a man dressed in white, not a gamphasante nor a blemyen. Morhange must be giving himself airs with his historical reasoning—all false, I repeat, all false.

Good Morhange. I hope his gamphasante does not let him fall on this unending stairway. Something glitters on the ceiling. Yes, it is a lamp—a copper lamp, as at Tunis, at Barbouchy's. Good; here again you can not see anything. But I am making a fool of myself; I am lying down. Now I can go to sleep. What a silly day!

Gentlemen, I assure you that it is unnecessary to bind me; I do not want to go down on the boulevards.

Darkness again. Steps of some one going away. Silence.

But only for a moment. There are people talking beside me. What are they saying? No, it is impossible. That metallic ring, that voice. Do you know what it is calling, that voice—do you know what it is calling in the tones of some one used to the phrase? Well, it is calling:

"Play your cards, gentlemen, play your cards. There are ten thousand louis in the bank. Play your cards, gentlemen."

In the name of God, am I or am I not at Ahaggar?

## CHAPTER VIII

### AWAKENING AT AHAGGAR

IT WAS broad daylight when I opened my eyes. I thought at once of Morhange. I could not see him, but I heard him close by, giving little grunts of surprize.

I called to him and he ran to me.

"Then they didn't tie you up?" I asked.

"I beg your pardon. They did. But they did it badly; I managed to get free."

"You might have untied me, too," I remarked crossly.

"What good would it have done? I should only have waked you up. And I thought that your first word would be to call me. There, that's done."

I reeled as I tried to stand on my feet.

Morhange smiled.

"We might have spent the whole night smoking and drinking and not been in a worse state," he said. "Anyhow that Eg-Anteouen with his hashish is a fine rascal."

"Cegheir-ben-Cheikh," I corrected.

I rubbed my hand over my forehead.

"Where are we?"

"My dear boy," Morhange replied, "since I awakened from the extraordinary nightmare which is mixed up with the smoky cave and the lamp-lit stairway of the Arabian Nights, I have been going from surprize to surprize, from confusion to confusion. Just look around you."

I rubbed my eyes and stared. Then I seized my friend's hand.

"Morhange," I begged, "tell me if we are still dreaming."

We were in a round room, perhaps fifty feet in diameter and of about the same height, lighted by a great window opening on a sky of intense blue.

Swallows flew back and forth outside, giving quick, joyous cries.

The floor, the incurving walls and the ceiling were of a kind of veined marble like porphyry, paneled with a strange metal, paler than gold, darker than silver, clouded just then by the early morning mist that came in through the window in great puffs.

I staggered toward this window, drawn by the freshness of the breeze and the sunlight which was chasing away my dreams, and I leaned my elbows on the balustrade.

I could not restrain a cry of delight.

I was standing on a kind of balcony, cut into the flank of a mountain and overhanging an abyss. Above me, blue sky; below appeared a veritable earthly paradise, hemmed in on all sides by mountains that formed a continuous and impassable wall about it. A garden lay spread out down there. The palm-trees gently swayed their great fronds. At their feet was a tangle of the smaller trees which grow in an oasis under their protection—almonds, lemons, oranges and many others which I could not distinguish from that height. A broad blue stream, fed by a waterfall, emptied into a charming lake, the waters of which had the marvelous transparency which comes in high altitudes. Great birds flew in circles over this green hollow; I could see in the lake the red flash of a flamingo.

The peaks of the mountains which towered on all sides were completely covered with snow.

The blue stream, the green palms, the golden fruit and, above it all the miraculous snow—all this bathed in that limpid air gave such an impression of beauty, of purity, that my poor human strength could no longer stand the sight of it. I laid my forehead on the balustrade, which was also covered with that heavenly snow, and began to cry like a baby.

MORHANGE was also behaving like a child. But he had awakened before I had and doubtless had had time to grasp, one by one, all these details, the fantastic *ensemble* of which staggered me.

He laid his hand on my shoulder and gently pulled me back into the room.

"You haven't seen anything yet," he said. "Look! Look!"

"Morhange!"

"Well, old man, what do you want me to do about it? Look!"

I had just realized that the strange room was furnished—God forgive me—in the European fashion. There were, indeed, here and there, round leather Tuareg cushions, brightly colored blankets from Gafsa, rugs from Kairouan and Caramani hangings which at that moment I should have dreaded to draw aside. A half-open panel in the wall showed a bookcase crowded with books. A whole row of photographs of masterpieces of ancient art were hung on the walls. Finally there was a table almost hidden under its heap of papers, pamphlets and books. I thought I should collapse at seeing a recent number of the *Archæological Review*.

I looked at Morhange. He was looking at me; and suddenly a mad laugh seized us and doubled us up for a good minute.

"I do not know," Morhange finally managed to say, "whether or not we shall some day regret our little excursion into Ahaggar, but admit in the mean time that it promises to be rich in unexpected adventures. That unforgettable guide who puts us to sleep just to distract us from the unpleasantness of caravan life and who lets me experience in the best of good faith the far-famed delights of hashish—that fantastic night ride and, to cap the climax, this cave of a Nureddin who must have received the education of the Athenian Bersot at the French *École Normale*—all this is enough, on my word, to upset the wits of the best balanced.

"Seriously, what do you think of it all?"

"What do I think, my poor friend? Why, just what you yourself think. I don't understand it at all, not at all. What you politely call my learning is not worth a cent. And why shouldn't I be all mixed up? This living in caves amazes me. Pliny speaks of the natives living in caves, seven days' march southwest of the country of the Amantes and twelve days to the westward of the Great Syrtis. Herodotus says also that the Garaments used to go out in their chariots to hunt the cave-dwelling Ethiopians.

"But here we are in Ahaggar, in the midst of the Targa country, and the best authorities tell us that the Tuareg never have been willing to live in caves. Duveyrier is precise on that point. And what is this, I ask you, but a cave turned into a workroom, with pictures of the Venus de Medici and the Apollo Sauroctonos on the walls? I tell you that it is enough to drive one mad."

With that Morhange threw himself on a couch and began to roar with laughter again.

"See," I said, "this is Latin."

I had picked up several scattered papers from the work-table in the middle of the room. Morhange took them from my hands and devoured them greedily. His face expressed unbounded stupefaction.

"Stranger and stranger, my boy. Some one here is composing, with much citation of texts, a dissertation on the Gorgon Islands—*de Gorgonum insulis*. Medusa, according to him, was a Libyan savage who lived near Lake Triton, our present Chott Melhrir, and it is there that Perseus— Ah!"

MORHANGE'S words choked in his throat. A sharp, shrill voice pierced the immense room.

"Gentlemen, I beg you, let my papers alone."

I turned toward the newcomer.

One of the Caramani curtains was drawn aside and the most unexpected of persons entered. Resigned as we were to unexpected events, the improbability of this sight exceeded anything our imaginations could have devised.

On the threshold stood a little bald-headed man with a pointed sallow face half-hidden by an enormous pair of green spectacles and a pepper-and-salt beard. No shirt was visible, only an impressive broad red cravat. He wore white trousers. Red leather slippers furnished the only Oriental suggestion in his costume.

He wore, not without pride, the rosette of an officer of the Department of Education.

He collected the papers which Morhange had dropped in his amazement, counted them, arranged them and then, casting a peevish glance at us, he struck a copper gong.

The portière was raised again. A huge white Targa entered. I seemed to recognize him as one of the genii of the cave.*

"Ferradji," angrily demanded the little officer of the Department of Education, "why were these gentlemen brought into the library?"

The Targa bowed respectfully.

"Cegheir-ben-Cheikh came back sooner than we expected," he replied, "and last night the embalmers had not yet finished. They were brought here in the mean time," and he pointed to us.

"Very well, you may go," snapped the little man.

Ferradji backed toward the door. On the threshold he stopped and spoke again—

"I was to remind you, sir, that dinner is served."

"All right. Go along."

And the little man seated himself at the desk and began to finger the papers feverishly.

I do not know why, but a mad feeling of exasperation seized me. I walked toward him.

"Sir," I said, "my friend and I do not know where we are nor who you are. We can see only that you are French, since you are wearing one of the highest honorary decorations of our country. You may have made the same observation on your part," I added, indicating the slender red ribbon which I wore on my vest.

He looked at me in contemptuous surprize.

"Well, sir?"

"Well, sir," I replied, "the negro who just went out pronounced the name of Cegheir-ben-Cheikh, the name of a brigand, a bandit, one of the assassins of Colonel Flatters. Are you acquainted with that detail, sir?"

The little man surveyed me coldly and shrugged his shoulders.

"Certainly. But what difference do you suppose that makes to me?"

"What!" I cried, beside myself with rage. "Who are you, anyway?"

"Sir," said the little old man with comical dignity, turning to Morhange, "I call you to witness the strange manners of your companion. I am here in my own house and I do not allow——"

"You must excuse my comrade, sir," said Morhange, stepping forward. "He is not a man of letters as you are. These young lieutenants are hot-headed, you know. And besides you can understand why both of us are not as calm as might be desired."

I was furious and on the point of disavowing these strangely humble words of Morhange, but a glance showed me that there was as much irony as surprize in his expression.

"I know indeed that most officers are brutes," grumbled the little old man, "but that is no reason——"

"I am only an officer myself," Morhange went on in an even humbler tone, "and if ever I have been sensible to the intellectual inferiority of that class, I assure you that it was just now in glancing—I beg your pardon for having taken the liberty to do so—in glancing over the learned pages which you devote to the passionate story of Medusa, according to Procles of Carthage, cited by Pausanias."

A laughable surprize spread over the features of the little old man. He hastily wiped his spectacles.

"What!" he finally cried.

"It is indeed unfortunate in this matter," Morhange continued imperturbably, "that we are not in possession of the curious dissertation devoted to this burning question by Statius Sebosus, a work which we know only through Pliny and which——"

"You know Statius Sebosus?"

"And which my master, the geographer Berlioux——"

"You knew Berlioux? You were his pupil?" stammered the little man with the decoration.

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* The negro serfs among the Tuareg are generally called "white Tuareg." While the nobles are clad in blue cotton robes, the serfs wear white robes, hence their name of "white Tuareg." See, in this connection, Duveyrier: *Les Tuareg du Nord*, page 292. (Note by M. Leroux.)

"I have had that honor," replied Morhange very coldly.

"But, but, sir, then you have heard mentioned, you are familiar with the question, the problem of Atlantis?"

"Indeed I am not unacquainted with the works of Lagneau, Ploix and Arbois de Jubainville," said Morhange frigidly.

"My ——!" The little man was going through extraordinary contortions. "Sir—captain, how happy I am, how many excuses——"

Just then the portière was raised. Ferradji appeared again.

"Sir, they want me to tell you that unless you come they will begin without you."

"I am coming, I am coming. Say, Ferradji, that we will be there in a moment. Why, sir, if I had foreseen— It is extraordinary to find an officer who knows Procles of Carthage and Arbois de Jubainville. Again—but I must introduce myself. I am Étienne Le Mesge, fellow of the University."

"Captain Morhange," said my companion.

I stepped forward in my turn.

"Lieutenant de Saint-Avit. It is a fact, sir, that I am very likely to confuse Procles of Carthage with Arbois de Jubainville. Later, I shall have to see about filling up those gaps, but just now I should like to know where we are, if we are free and if not, what occult power holds us. You have the appearance, sir, of being sufficiently at home in this house to be able to enlighten us upon this point, which I must confess I weakly consider of the first importance."

M. Le Mesge looked at me. A rather malevolent smile twitched the corners of his mouth. He opened his lips.

A gong sounded impatiently.

"In good time, gentlemen, I will tell you. I will explain everything, but now you see that we must hurry. It is time for lunch and our fellow diners will get tired of waiting."

"Our fellow diners?"

"There are two of them," M. Le Mesge explained. "We three constitute the European personnel of the house—that is, the fixed personnel," he seemed to feel obliged to add with his disquieting smile. "Two strange fellows, gentlemen, with whom, doubtless, you will care to have as little to do as possible. One is a churchman, narrow-minded, though a Protestant. The other is a man of the world gone astray, an old fool."

"Pardon," I said, "but it must have been he whom I heard last night. He was gambling—with you and the minister doubtless?"

M. Le Mesge made a gesture of offended dignity.

"The idea! With me, sir? It is with the Tuareg that he plays. He teaches them every game imaginable. There, that is he who is striking the gong to hurry us up. It is half past nine and the *Salle de Trente et Quarante* opens at ten o'clock. Let us hurry. Anyway I suppose that you will not be averse to a little refreshment."

"Indeed we shall not refuse," Morhange replied.

WE FOLLOWED M. Le Mesge along a long winding corridor with frequent steps. The passage was dark, but at intervals rose-colored night lights and incense-burners were placed in niches cut into the solid rock. Passionate Oriental scents perfumed the darkness and contrasted strangely with the cold air of the snowy peaks.

From time to time a white Targa, mute and expressionless as a phantom, would pass us and we would hear the clatter of his footsteps die away behind us.

M. Le Mesge stopped before a heavy door covered with the same pale metal which I had noticed on the walls of the library. He opened it and stood aside to let us pass.

Although the dining-room which we entered had little in common with European dining-rooms, I have known many which might have envied its comfort. Like the library it was lighted by a great window, and I noticed that it had an outside exposure, while the window of the library overlooked the garden in the center of the crown of mountains.

There was no center-table and none of those barbaric pieces of furniture that we call chairs, but a great number of credences of gilded wood, like those of Venice, heavy hangings of dull and subdued colors and Tuareg or Tunisian cushions. In the center was a huge mat on which a feast was placed in finely woven baskets set among silver pitchers and copper basins filled with perfumed water. The sight of it filled me with childish satisfaction.

M. Le Mesge stepped forward and introduced us to the two persons who already had taken their places on the mat.

"Mr. Spardek," he said, and by that simple phrase I understood how far our host placed himself above vain human titles.

The Rev. Mr. Spardek of Manchester bowed reservedly and asked our permission to keep on his tall, wide-brimmed hat. He was a dry, cold man, tall and thin. He ate heartily and in pious sadness.

"M. Bielowsky," said M. Le Mesge, introducing us to the second guest.

"Count Casimir Bielowsky, Hetman of Jitomir," the latter corrected with perfect good humor as he stood up to shake hands.

I felt at once a certain liking for the Hetman of Jitomir, who was a perfect example of an old beau. His chocolate-colored hair was parted in the center—later I found out that the hetman dyed it with a concoction of kohl. He had magnificent whiskers, also chocolate-colored, in the style of the Emperor Francis Joseph. His nose was undeniably a little red, but very fine and aristocratic. His hands were marvelous.

It took some thought to place the date of the style of the count's costume—bottle green with yellow facings, ornamented with a huge seal of silver and enamel. The recollection of a portrait of the Duke of Morny made me decide on 1860 or 1862, and the further chapters of this story will show that I was not far wrong.

The count made me sit down beside him. One of his first questions was to demand if I ever cut fives—*tirer à cinq*, a card game played only for very high stakes.

"That depends on how I feel," I replied.

"Well said. I have not done so since 1866. I swore off. A row. The devil of a party. One day at Walewski's I cut fives. Naturally I wasn't worrying any. The other had a four. 'Idiot!' cried the little Baron de Chaux Gisseux, who was laying staggering sums on my table. I hurled a bottle of champagne at his head. He ducked. It was Marshal Baillant who got the bottle. A scene! The matter was fixed up because we were both members of the same fraternal order. The emperor made me promise not to cut fives again. I have kept my promise, but there are moments when it is hard."

He added in a voice steeped in melancholy:

"Try a little of this Ahaggar, 1880. Excellent vintage. It is I, lieutenant, who instructed these people in the uses of the juice of the vine. The wine of the palm-trees is very good when it is properly fermented, but it gets insipid in the long run."

It was powerful, that Ahaggar, 1880. We sipped it from large silver goblets. It was fresh as Rhine wine, dry as the wine of the Hermitage. And then suddenly it brought back recollections of the burning wines of Portugal; it seemed sweet, fruity—an admirable wine, I tell you.

That wine crowned the most perfect of luncheons. There were few meats, to be sure, but those few were remarkably seasoned, and there was a profusion of cakes, pancakes served with honey, fragrant fritters and cheese-cakes of sour milk and dates. And everywhere, in great enamel platters or wicker jars, fruit, masses of fruit—figs, dates, jujubes, pomegranates, apricots, huge bunches of grapes larger than those which bent the shoulders of the Hebrews in the land of Canaan, heavy watermelons cut in two, showing their moist red pulp and their rows of black seeds.

I had scarcely finished one of these beautiful iced fruits when M. Le Mesge rose.

"Gentlemen, if you are ready," he said to Morhange and me.

"Get away from that old dotard as soon as you can," whispered the hetman of Jitomir to me. "The party of *trente et quarante* will begin soon. You shall see. You shall see. We go it even harder than at Cora Pearl's."

"Gentlemen," repeated M. Le Mesge in his dry tone.

We followed him. When the three of us were back in the library again, he said, addressing me:

"You, sir, asked a little while ago what occult power holds you here. Your manner was threatening and I should have refused to comply had it not been for your friend, whose knowledge enables him to appreciate better than you the value of the revelations I am about to make to you."

He touched a spring in the side of the wall. A cupboard appeared, stuffed with books. He took one.

"You are both of you," continued M. Le Mesge, "in the power of a woman. This woman, the sultaness, the queen, the absolute sovereign of Ahaggar, is called Antinea. Don't start, M. Morhange, you will soon understand."

He opened the book and read this sentence:

" 'I must warn you before I take up the

subject matter that you must not be surprized to hear me call the barbarians by Greek names.' "

"What is that book?" demanded Morhange, whose pallor terrified me.

"This book," M. Le Mesge replied very slowly, weighing his words with an extraordinary expression of triumph, "is the greatest, the most beautiful, the most secret of the dialogues of Plato; it is the 'Critias' or 'Atlantis.' "

"The 'Critias'? But it is unfinished," murmured Morhange.

"It is unfinished in France, in Europe—everywhere else," said M. Le Mesge, "but it is finished here. Look for yourself at this copy."

"But what connection," repeated Morhange while his eyes traveled avidly over the pages, "what connection can there be between this dialogue, complete—yes, it seems to me complete—what connection with this woman, Antinea? Why should it be in her possession?"

"Because," replied the little man imperturbably, "this book is her patent of nobility, her *Almanach de Gotha* in a sense, do you understand? Because it establishes her prodigious genealogy; because she is——"

"Because she is?" repeated Morhange.

"Because she is the granddaughter of Neptune, the last descendant of the Atlantides."

## CHAPTER IX

### ATLANTIS

M. LE MESGE looked at Morhange triumphantly. It was evident that he addressed himself exclusively to Morhange considering him alone worthy of his confidences.

"There have been many, sir," he said, "both French and foreign officers, who have been brought here at the caprice of our sovereign, Antinea. You are the first to be honored by my disclosures. But you were the pupil of Berlioux and I owe so much to the memory of that great man that it seems to me I may do him homage by imparting to one of his disciples the unique results of my private research."

He struck the bell. Ferradji appeared.

"Coffee for these gentlemen," ordered M. Le Mesge.

He handed us a box, gorgeously decorated in the most flaming colors, full of Egyptian cigarets.

"I never smoke," he explained. "But Antinea sometimes comes here. These are her cigarets. Help yourselves, gentlemen."

I have always had a horror of that pale tobacco which gives a barber of the rue de la Michodière the illusion of Oriental voluptuousness, but in their way these musk-scented cigarets were not bad and it had been a long time since I used up my stock of caporal.

"Here are the back numbers of *La Vie Parisienne*," said M. Le Mesge to me. "Amuse youself with them, if you like, while I talk to your friend."

"Sir," I replied bruskly, "it is true that I never studied with Berlioux. Nevertheless you must allow me to listen to your conversation. I shall hope to find something in it to amuse me."

"As you wish," said the little old man.

We settled ourselves comfortably. M. Le Mesge sat down before the desk, shot his cuffs and commenced as follows:

"However much, gentlemen, I prize complete objectivity in matters of erudition, I can not utterly detach my own history from that of the last descendant of Clito and Neptune.

"I am the creation of my own efforts. From my childhood the prodigious impulse given to the science of history by the nineteenth century has affected me. I saw where my way led. I have followed it in spite of everything.

"In spite of everything, everything—I mean it literally. With no other resources than my own work and merit, I was received as fellow of history and geography at the examination of 1880. A great examination! Among the thirteen who were accepted there were names which have since become illustrious—Jullian, Bourgeois, Auerbach.

"I do not envy my colleagues the summits of their official honors; I have read their works with commiseration and the pitiful errors to which they are condemned by the insufficiency of their documents would amply counterbalance my chagrin and fill me with ironic joy, had I not been raised long since above the satisfaction of self-love.

"When I was professor at the *Lycée du Parc* at Lyons, I knew Berlioux and followed eagerly his works on African history. I had at that time a very original idea for my doctor's thesis. I was going to establish a parallel between the Berber heroine of the seventh century, Kahena, who struggled against the Arab invader, and the French heroine, Joan of Arc, who struggled against the English invader. I proposed to the *Faculté des Lettres* at Paris this title for my thesis: 'Joan of Arc and the Tuareg.'

"This simple announcement gave rise to a perfect outcry in learned circles, a furor of ridicule. My friends warned me discreetly. I refused to believe them. Finally I was forced to believe when my rector summoned me before him and, after manifesting an astonishing interest in my health, asked whether I should object to taking two years' leave on half-pay. I refused indignantly. The rector did not insist, but fifteen days later a ministerial decree, with no other legal procedure, assigned me to one of the most insignificant and remote *lycées* of France, that at Mont-de-Marsan.

"Realize my exasperation and you will excuse the excesses to which I delivered myself in that strange country. What is there to do in Landes, if you neither eat nor drink? I did both violently. My pay melted away in *foies gras*, in woodcocks, in fine wines. The result came quickly enough; in less than a year my joints began to crack like the overoiled axle of a bicycle that has gone a long way upon a dusty track. A sharp attack of gout kept me to me bed. Fortunately, in that blessed country the cure is in reach of the suffering, so I departed to Dax at vacation time to try the waters.

"I RENTED a room on the bank of the Adour, overlooking the Promenade des Baigneurs. A charwoman took care of it for me. She worked also for an old gentleman, a retired examining magistrate, president of the Roger-Ducos Society, which was a vague scientific backwater in which the scholars of the neighborhood applied themselves with prodigious incompetence to the most whimsical subjects.

"One afternoon I stayed in my room on account of a very heavy rain. The good woman was energetically polishing the copper latch of my door. She used a paste called Tripoli, which she spread upon a paper and rubbed and rubbed. The peculiar appearance of the paper made me curious. I glanced at it.

" 'Great Heavens! Where did you get this paper?' I demanded.

"She was perturbed.

" 'At my master's; he has lots of it. I tore this out of a notebook.'

" 'Here are ten francs. Go and get me the notebook.'

"A quarter of an hour later she was back with it. But good luck it lacked only one page, the one with which she had been polishing my door. This manuscript, this notebook, have you any idea what it was? Merely the 'Voyage to Atlantis' of the mythologist Denis de Milet which is mentioned by Diodorus, and the loss of which I had so often heard Berlioux deplore.*

"This inestimable document contained numerous quotations from the 'Critias.' It gave an abstract of the illustrious dialogue, the sole existing copy of which you held in your hands a little while ago. It established past controversy the location of the stronghold of the Atlantides and demonstrated that this site, which is denied by science, was not submerged by the waves, as is supposed by the rare and timorous defenders of the Atlantide hypothesis. He called it the 'central Mazycian range.' You know there is no longer any doubt as to the identification of the Mazyces of Herodotus with the people of Imoschaoch, the Tuareg. But the manuscript of Denis unquestionably identifies the historical Mazyces with the Atlantides of the supposed legend.

"I learned, therefore, from Denis, not only that the central part of Atlantis, the cradle and home of the dynasty of Neptune, had not sunk in the disaster described by Plato as engulfing the rest of the Atlantide isle, but also that it corresponded to the Tuareg Ahaggar, and that in this Ahaggar, at least in his time, the noble dynasty of Neptune was supposed to be still existent.

"The historians of Atlantis put the date of the cataclysm which destroyed all or part of that famous country at nine thousand years before Christ. If Denis de Milet, who wrote scarcely three thousand years ago, believed that in his time the dynastic issue of Neptune were still ruling its dominion, you will understand that I thought immediately that what has lasted nine thousand years may last eleven thousand. From that instant I had only one aim: To find the possible descendants of the Atlantides and, since I had many reasons for supposing them to be debased and ignorant of their original splendor, to inform them of their illustrious descent.

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* How did the "Voyage to Atlantis" arrive at Dax? I have found so far only one credible hypothesis; it might have been discovered in Africa by the traveler, de Behagle, a member of the Roger-Ducos Society, who studied at the college of Dax, and later on several occasions visited the town. (Note by M. Leroux.)

"You will easily understand why I imparted none of my intentions to my superiors at the University. To solicit their approval or even their permission, considering the attitude they had taken toward me, would have been almost certainly to invite confinement in a cell. So I raised what I could on my own account and departed without trumpet or drum for Oran. On the first of October I reached In-Salah. Stretched at my ease beneath a palm-tree at the oasis, I took infinite pleasure in considering how, that very day, the principal of Mont-de-Marsan, beside himself, struggling to control twenty horrible urchins howling before the door of an empty class-room, would be telegraphing wildly in all directions in search of his lost history professor."

M. LE MESGE stopped and looked at us to mark his satisfaction.

I admit that I forgot my dignity and I forgot the affectation he had steadily assumed of talking only to Morhange.

"You will pardon me, sir, if your discourse interests me more than I had anticipated, but you know very well that I lack the fundamental instruction necessary to understand you. You speak of the dynasty of Neptune. What is this dynasty from which, I believe, you trace the descent of Antinea? What is her rôle in the story of Atlantis?"

M. Le Mesge smiled with condescension, meantime winking at Morhange with the eye nearest to him. Morhange was listening without expression, without a word, chin in hand, elbow on knee.

"Plato will answer for me, sir," said the professor, and he added with an accent of inexpressible pity, "Is it really possible that you have never made the acquaintance of the introduction to the " 'Critias'?"

He placed on the table the book by which Morhange had been so strangely moved. He adjusted his spectacles and began to read. It seemed as if the magic of Plato vibrated through and transfigured this ridiculous little old man.

" 'Having drawn by lot the different parts of the earth, the gods obtained, some a larger, and some a smaller, share. It was thus that Neptune, having received in the division the isle of Atlantis, came to place the children he had had by a mortal in one part of that isle. It was not far from the sea, a plain situated in the midst of the isle, the most beautiful and, they say, the most fertile of plains.

" 'About fifty stadia from that plain, in the middle of the isle, was a mountain. There dwelt one of those men who, in the very beginning, was born of the Earth, Evenor, with his wife, Leucippe. They had only one daughter, Clito. She was marriageable when her mother and father died and Neptune, being enamored of her, married her. Neptune fortified the mountain where she dwelt by isolating it. He made alternate girdles of sea and land, the one smaller, the others greater, two of earth and three of water, and circled them round the isle in such a manner that they were at all parts equally distant.' "

M. Le Mesge broke off his reading.

"Does this arrangement recall nothing to you?" he queried.

"Morhange, Morhange!" I stammered. "You remember—our route yesterday, our abduction, the two corridors that we had to cross before arriving at this mountain? The girdles of earth and of water? Two tunnels, two enclosures of earth?"

"Ha, ha," chuckled M. Le Mesge.

He smiled as he looked at me. I understood that this smile meant: Can he be less obtuse than I had supposed?

As if with a mighty effort Morhange broke the silence.

"I understand well enough—I understand. The three girdles of water—but then, you are supposing, sir—an explanation the ingeniousness of which I do not contest—you are supposing the exact hypothesis of the Saharan sea."

"I suppose it and I can prove it," replied the irascible little old chap, banging his fist on the table. "I know well enough what Schirmer and the rest had advanced against it. I know it better than you do. I know all about it, sir. I can present all the proofs for your consideration. And in the mean time, this evening at dinner, you will no doubt enjoy some excellent fish. And you will tell me whether these fish, caught in the lake that you can see from this window, seem to you fresh-water fish.

"You must realize," he continued more

calmly, "the mistake of those who, believing in Atlantis, have sought to explain the cataclysm in which they suppose the whole island to have sunk. Without exception they have thought that it was swallowed up. Actually there has not been an immersion. There has been an emersion. New lands have emerged from the Atlantic wave. The desert has replaced the sea; the *sebkas*, the salt lakes, the Triton lakes, the sandy syrtes are the desolate vestiges of the free sea-water over which in former days the fleets swept with a fair wind toward the conquest of Attica.

"Sand swallows up civilization better than water. Today there remains nothing but this chalky mass of the beautiful isle that the sea and winds kept gay and verdant. Nothing has endured in this rocky basin, cut off forever from the living world, but the marvelous oasis that you have at your feet—these red fruits, this cascade, this blue lake, sacred witnesses to the golden age that is gone.

"Last evening, in coming here, you had to cross the five enclosures—the three belts of water, dry forever; the two girdles of earth through which are hollowed the passages you traversed on camel-back, where formerly the triremes floated. The only thing that in this immense catastrophe has preserved its likeness to its former state, is this mountain, the mountain where Neptune shut up his well-beloved Clito, the daughter of Evenor and Leucippe, the mother of Atlas and the ancestress of Antinea, the sovereign under whose dominion you are about to enter forever."

"SIR," said Morhange with the most exquisite courtesy, "it would be only a natural anxiety which would urge us to inquire the reasons and the end of this dominion. But behold to what extent your revelations interest me; I defer this question of private interest. Of late, in two caverns, it has been my fortune to discover Tifinar inscriptions of this name, Antinea. My comrade is witness that I took it for a Greek name. I understand now, thanks to you and the divine Plato, that I need no longer feel surprized to hear a barbarian called by a Greek name. But I am no less perplexed as to the etymology of the word. Can you enlighten me?"

"I shall certainly not fail you there, sir," said M. Le Mesge. "I may tell you, too, that you are not the first to put to me that question. Most of the explorers that I have seen enter here in the past ten years have been attracted in the same way, intrigued by this Greek work reproduced in Tifinar. I have even arranged a fairly exact catalogue of these inscriptions and the caverns where they are to be met with.

"All, or almost all, are accompanied by this legend: 'Antinea. Here commences her domain.' I myself have had repainted with ocher such as were beginning to be effaced. But to return to what I was telling you before, none of the Europeans who have followed this epigraphic mystery here have kept their anxiety to solve this etymology, once they found themselves in Antinea's palace. They all become otherwise preoccupied. I might make many disclosures as to the little real importance which purely scientific interests possess even for scholars, and the quickness with which they sacrifice them to the most mundane considerations—their own lives for instance."

"Let us take that up another time, sir, if it is satisfactory to you," said Morhange, always admirably polite.

"This digression had only one point, sir—to show you that I do not count you among these unworthy scholars. You are really eager to know the origin of this name, Antinea, and that before knowing what kind of woman it belongs to and her motives for holding you and this gentleman as her prisoners."

I stared hard at the little old man, but he spoke with profound seriousness.

"So much the better for you, my boy," I thought. "Otherwise it wouldn't have taken me long to send you through the window to air your ironies at your ease. The law of gravity ought not to be topsy-turvy here at Ahaggar."

"You no doubt formulated several hypotheses when you first encountered the name, Antinea," continued M. Le Mesge, imperturbable under my fixed gaze, addressing himself to Morhange. "Would you object to repeating them to me?"

"Not at all, sir," said Morhange.

And very composedly he enumerated the etymological suggestions I have given previously.

The little man with the cherry-colored shirt-front rubbed his hands.

"Very good," he admitted with an accent of intense jubilation. "Amazingly good for one with only the modicum of Greek that you possess, but it is all none the less false, absolutely false."

"It is because I suspected as much that I put my question to you," said Morhange blandly.

"I will not keep you longer in suspense," said M. Le Mesge. "The word Antinea is composed as follows: *ti* is nothing but a Tifinar addition to an essentially Greek name. *Ti* is the Berber feminine article. We have several examples of this combination. Take Tipasa, the North African town. The name means the whole, from *ti* and from *pan*. So, *tinea* signifies the new, from *ti* and from *nea*."

"And the prefix *an?*" queried Morhange.

"Is it possible, sir, that I have put myself to the trouble of talking to you for a solid hour about the Critias with such trifling effect? It is certain that the prefix *an*, alone, has no meaning. You will understand that it has one when I tell you that we have here a very curious case of apocope. You must not read *an;* you must read *atlan*. *Atl* has been lost by apocope; *an* has survived. To sum up, Antinea is composed in the following manner: *Atlantinea*, and its meaning, 'the new Atlantis,' is dazzlingly apparent from this demonstration."

I looked at Morhange. His astonishment was without bounds. The Berber prefix *ti* had literally stunned him.

"Have you had occasion, sir, to verify this very ingenious etymology?" he was finally able to gasp out.

"You have only to glance over these few books," said M. Le Mesge disdainfully.

He opened successively five, ten, twenty cupboards. An enormous library was spread out to our view.

"Everything, everything—it is all here?" murmured Morhange with an astonishing inflection of terror and admiration.

"Everything that is worth consulting, at any rate," said M. Le Mesge. "All the great books whose loss the so-called learned world deplores today."

"And how has it happened?"

"Sir, you distress me. I thought you familiar with certain events. You are forgetting, then, the passage where Pliny the elder speaks of the library of Carthage and the treasures which were accumulated there? In 146, when that city fell under the blows of the knave Scipio, the incredible collection of illiterates who were the Roman Senate had only the profoundest contempt for these riches. They presented them to the native kings.

"This is how Mantabal received this priceless heritage; it was transmitted to his son and grandsons, Hiempsal, Juba I and Juba II, the husband of the admirable Cleopatra Selene, the daughter of the great Cleopatra and Mark Antony. Cleopatra Selene had a daughter who married an Atlantide king. This is how Antinea, the descendant of Neptune, counts among her ancestors the immortal queen of Egypt. That is how, by following the laws of inheritance, the remains of the library of Carthage, enriched by the remnants of the library of Alexandria, are actually before your eyes.

"Science fled from man. While he was building those monstrous babels of pseudo-science in Berlin, London and Paris, science was taking refuge in this desert-corner of Ahaggar. They may well forge their hypotheses back there, based on the loss of the mysterious works of antiquity, but these works are not lost. They are here. They are here—the Hebrew, the Chaldean, the Assyrian books. Here, the great Egyptian traditions which inspired Solon, Herodotus and Plato. Here, the Greek mythologists, the magicians of Roman Africa, the Indian mystics—all the treasures in a word, for the lack of which contemporary dissertations are poor laughable things.

"Believe me he is well avenged, the little universitarian whom they took for a madman, whom they defied. I have lived, I live, I shall live in a perpetual burst of laughter at their false and garbled erudition. And when I shall be dead, error—thanks to the jealous precaution of Neptune, taken to isolate his well-beloved Clito from the rest of the world—error, I say, will continue to reign as sovereign mistress of their pitiful compositions."

"Sir," said Morhange in a grave voice, "you have just affirmed the influence of Egypt on the civilization of the people here. For reasons which some day perhaps I shall have occasion to explain to you, I would like to have proof of that relationship."

"We need not wait for that, sir," said M. Le Mesge.

Then in my turn I advanced.

"Two words, if you please, sir," I said brutally. "I will not hide from you that these historical discussions seem to me absolutely out of place. It is not my fault if you have had trouble with the University and if you are not today at the College of France or elsewhere. For the moment just one thing concerns me: To know just what this lady, Antinea, wants with us. My comrade would like to know her relation with ancient Egypt—very well. For my part, I desire above everything to know her relations with the government of Algeria and the Arabian Bureau."

M. Le Mesge gave a strident laugh.

"I am going to give you an answer that will satisfy you both," he replied.

And he added:

"Follow me. It is time that you should learn."

## CHAPTER X

### THE RED MARBLE HALL

FOLLOWING M. Le Mesge, we passed through an interminable series of stairs and corridors.

"You lose all sense of direction in this labyrinth," I muttered to Morhange.

"Worse still, you will lose your head," answered my companion *sotto voce*. "This old fool is certainly very learned, but God knows what he is driving at. However, he has promised that we are soon to know."

M. Le Mesge had stopped before a heavy dark door all incrusted with strange symbols. Turning the lock with difficulty, he opened it.

"Enter, gentlemen, I beg you," he said.

A gust of cold air struck us full in the face. The room we were entering was chill as a vault.

At first the darkness allowed me to form no idea of its proportions. The lighting, purposely subdued, consisted of twelve enormous copper lamps placed column-like upon the ground and burning with brilliant red flames. As we entered, the wind from the corridor made the flames flicker, momentarily casting about us our own enlarged and misshapen shadows. Then the gust died down and the flames, no longer flurried, again licked up the darkness with their motionless red tongues.

These twelve giant lamps—each one about ten feet high—were arranged in a kind of crown, the diameter of which must have been about fifty feet. In the center of this circle was a dark mass all streaked with trembling red reflections. When I drew nearer I saw it was a bubbling fountain. It was the freshness of this water which had maintained the temperature of which I have spoken.

Huge seats were cut in the central rock from which gushed the murmuring, shadowy fountain. They were heaped with silky cushions. Twelve incense-burners within the circle of red lamps formed a second crown, half as large in diameter. Their smoke mounted toward the vault, invisible in the darkness, but their perfume, combined with the coolness and sound of the water, banished from the soul all other desire than to remain there forever.

M. Le Mesge made us sit down in the center of the hall on the Cyclopean seats. He seated himself between us.

"In a few minutes," he said, "your eyes will grow accustomed to the obscurity."

I noticed that he spoke in a hushed voice, as if he were in church.

Little by little our eyes did indeed grow used to the red light. Only the lower part of the great hall was illuminated. The whole vault was drowned in shadow and its height was impossible to estimate. Vaguely I could perceive overhead a great smooth gold chandelier, flecked, like everything else, with somber red reflections, but there was no means of judging the length of the chain by which it hung from the dark ceiling.

The marble of the pavement was of so high a polish that the great torches were reflected even there.

This room, I repeat, was round—a perfect circle, of which the fountain at our backs was the center.

We sat facing the curving walls. Before long we began to be able to see them. They were of peculiar construction divided into a series of niches, broken ahead of us by the door which had just opened to give us passage; behind us by a second door, a still darker hole which I divined in the darkness when I turned around. From one door to the other I counted sixty niches, making in all one hundred and twenty. Each was about ten feet high. Each contained a kind of case, larger above than below, closed only at the lower end. In all these cases, except two just opposite me, I thought I could discern a brilliant shape, a human shape certainly, something like a statue of very pale bronze. In the arc of the circle before me I counted clearly thirty of these strange statues.

What were these statues? I wanted to see. I rose.

M. Le Mesge put his hand on my arm.

"In good time," he murmured in the same low voice; "all in good time."

THE professor was watching the door by which we had entered the hall and from behind which we could hear the sound of footsteps becoming more and more distinct.

It opened quietly to admit three Tuareg slaves. Two of them were carrying a long package on their shoulders; the third seemed to be their chief.

At a sign from him they placed the package on the ground and drew out from one of the niches the case which it contained.

"You may approach, gentlemen," said M. Le Mesge.

He motioned the three Tuareg to withdraw several paces.

"You asked me not long since for some proof of the Egyptian influence on this country," said M. Le Mesge. "What do you say to that case, to begin with?"

As he spoke he pointed to the case that the servants had deposited upon the ground after they took it from its niche.

Morhange uttered a thick cry.

We had before us one of those cases designed for the preservation of mummies. The same shiny wood, the same bright decorations, the only difference being that here Tifinar writing replaced the hieroglyphics. The form, narrow at the base, broader above, ought to have been enough to enlighten us.

I have already said that the lower half of this large case was closed, giving the whole structure the appearance of a rectangular wooden shoe.

M. Le Mesge knelt and fastened to the lower part of the case a square of white cardboard, a large label that he had picked up from his desk a few minutes before on leaving the library.

"You may read," he said simply but still in the same low tone.

I knelt also, for the light of the great candelabra was scarcely sufficient to read the label where, none the less, I recognized the professor's handwriting.

It bore these words in a round hand:

**Number 53. Major Sir Archibald Russell. Born at Richmond July 5, 1860. Died at Ahaggar December 3, 1896.**

I leaped to my feet.

"Major Russell!" I exclaimed.

"Not so loud, not so loud," said M. Le Mesge. "No one speaks out loud here."

"The Major Russell," I repeated, obeying his injunction as if in spite of myself, who left Khartum last year to explore, Sokoto?"

"The same," replied the professor.

"And—where is Major Russell?"

"He is there," replied M. Le Mesge.

The professor made a gesture. The Tuareg approached.

A poignant silence reigned in the mysterious hall, broken only by the fresh splashing of the fountain.

The three negroes were occupied in undoing the package that they had put down near the painted case. Weighed down with wordless horror, Morhange and I stood watching.

Soon a rigid form, a human form, appeared. A red gleam played over it. We had before us, stretched out upon the ground, a statue of pale bronze, wrapped in a kind of white veil, a statue like those all around us, upright in their niches. It seemed to fix us with an impenetrable gaze.

"Sir Archibald Russell," murmured M. Le Mesge slowly.

Morhange approached, speechless, but strong enough to lift up the white veil. For a long, long time he gazed at the sad bronze statue.

"A mummy, a mummy?" he said finally. "You deceive yourself, sir; this is no mummy."

"Accurately speaking, no," replied M. Le Mesge. "This is not a mummy. None the less you have before you the mortal remains of Sir Archibald Russell. I must point out to you here, my dear sir, that the processes of embalming used by Antinea differ from the processes employed in ancient Egypt. Here there is no natron, nor bands, nor spices. The industry of Ahaggar in a single effort has achieved a result obtained by European science only after long experiments. Imagine my surprize when I arrived here and found that they were employing a method I supposed known only to the civilized world."

M. Le Mesge gave a light tap with his finger on the forehead of Sir Archibald Russell. It rang like metal.

"It is bronze," I said. "That is not a human forehead; it is bronze."

M. Le Mesge shrugged his shoulders.

"It is a human forehead," he affirmed curtly, "and not bronze. Bronze is darker, sir. This is the great unknown metal of which Plato speaks in the 'Critias' and which is something between gold and silver; it is the special metal of the mountains of the Atlantides. It is orichalc."

Bending again, I satisfied myself that this metal was the same as that with which the walls of the library were overcast.

"It is orichalc," continued M. Le Mesge. "You look as if you had no idea how a human body can look like a statue of orichalc. Come, Captain Morhange, you to whom I gave credit for a certain amount of knowledge, have you never heard of the method of Dr. Variot, by which a human body can be preserved without embalming? Have you never read the book of that practitioner?*

"He explains a method called electroplating. The skin is coated with a very thin layer of silver salts to make it a conductor. The body then is placed in a solution of copper sulfate and the polar currents do their work. The body of this estimable English major has been metalized in the same manner, except that a solution of orichalc sulfate, a very rare substance, has been substituted for that of copper sulfate. Thus, instead of the statue of a poor slave, a copper statue, you have before you a statue of metal more precious than silver or gold—in a word, a statue worthy of the granddaughter of Neptune."

M. Le Mesge waved his arm. The black slaves seized the body. In a few seconds they slid the orichalc ghost into its painted wooden sheath. That was set on end and slid into its niche beside the niche where an exactly similar sheath was labeled "Number 52."

UPON finishing their task they retired without a word. A draft of cold air from the door again made the flames of the copper torches flicker and throw great shadows about us.

Morhange and I remained as motionless as the pale metal specters which surrounded us. Suddenly I pulled myself together and staggered forward to the niche beside that in which they had just laid the remains of the English major. I looked for the label.

Supporting myself against the red marble wall, I read:

Number 52. Captain Laurent Deligne. Born at Paris July 22, 1861. Died at Ahaggar October 30, 1896.

"Captain Deligne!" murmured Morhange. "He left Colomb-Béchar in 1895 for Timmimoun and no more has been heard of him since then."

"Exactly," said M. Le Mesge with a little nod of approval.

"'Number 51,' " read Morhange with chattering teeth. " 'Colonel von Wittman, born at Jena in 1855. Died at Ahaggar May 1, 1896.' Colonel Wittman, the explorer of Kanem who disappeared off Agades."

"Exactly," said M. Le Mesge again.

" 'Number 50,' " I read in my turn, steadying myself against the wall so as not to fall. " 'Marquis Alonzo d'Oliveira, born at Cadiz February 21, 1868. Died at Ahaggar February 1, 1896.' Oliveira, who was going to Araouan."

"Exactly," said M. Le Mesge again. "That Spaniard was one of the best educated. I used to have interesting discussions with him on the exact geographical position of the kingdom of Antée."

" 'Number 49,' " said Morhange in a tone scarcely more than a whisper. " 'Lieutenant Woodhouse, born at Liverpool September 16, 1870. Died at Ahaggar October 4, 1895.' "

"Hardly more than a child," said M. Le Mesge.

" 'Number 48,' " I said. " 'Lieutenant Louis de Maillefeu, born at Provins, the——' "

I did not finish. My voice choked.

Louis de Maillefeu, my best friend, the friend of my childhood and of Saint-Cyr. I looked at him and recognized him under the metallic coating. Louis de Maillefeu!

I laid my forehead against the cold wall and with shaking shoulders began to sob.

I heard the muffled voice of Morhange speaking to the professor:

"Sir, this has lasted long enough. Let us make an end to it."

"He wanted to know," said M. Le Mesge. "What am I to do?"

I went up to him and seized his shoulders.

"What happened to him? What did he die of?"

"Just like all the others," the professor replied; "like Lieutenant Woodhouse, like

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* Variot: "*L'anthropologie galvanique*." Paris, 1890. (Note by M. Leroux.)

Captain Deligne, like Major Russell, like Colonel von Wittman, like the forty-seven of yesterday and all those of tomorrow."

"Of what did they die?" Morhange demanded imperatively in his turn.

The professor looked at Morhange. I saw my comrade grow pale.

"Of what did they die, sir? They died of love!"

And he added in a very low, very grave voice—

"Now you know."

Gently and with a tact which we should hardly have suspected in him, M. Le Mesge drew us away from the statues. A moment later Morhange and I found ourselves again seated, or rather sunk, among the cushions in the center of the room. The invisible fountain murmured its plaint at our feet.

Le Mesge sat between us.

"Now you know," he repeated. "You know but you do not yet understand."

Then, very slowly, he said:

"YOU are, as they have been, the prisoners of Antinea. And vengeance is due Antinea."

"Vengeance?" said Morhange, who had regained his self-possession. "For what, I beg to ask? What have the lieutenant and I done to Atlantis? How have we incurred her hatred?"

"It is an old quarrel, a very old quarrel," the professor replied gravely. "A quarrel which long antedates you, M. Morhange."

"Explain yourself, I beg of you, professor."

"You are a man. She is a woman," said the dreamy voice of M. Le Mesge. "The whole matter lies there."

"Really, sir, I do not see—we do not see."

"You are going to understand. Have you really forgotten to what extent the beautiful queens of antiquity had just cause to complain of the strangers whom fortune brought to their borders? The poet, Victor Hugo, pictured their detestable acts well enough in his colonial poem called '*La Fille d'O-Taiti.*' Wherever we look we see similar examples of fraud and ingratitude. These gentlemen made free use of the beauty and the riches of the lady. Then one fine morning they disappeared. She was indeed lucky if her lover, having observed the position carefully, did not return with ships and troops of occupation."

"Your learning charms me," said Morhange. "Continue."

"Do you need examples? Alas, they abound. Think of the cavalier fashion in which Ulysses treated Calypso, Diomedes, Callirrhoë. What should I say of Theseus and Ariadne? Jason treated Medea with inconceivable lightness. The Romans continued the tradition with still greater brutality. Æneas, who has many characteristics in common with the Rev. Spardek, treated Dido in a most undeserved fashion. Cæsar was a laurel-crowned blackguard in his relations with the divine Cleopatra. Titus, that hypocrite Titus, after having lived a whole year in Idumæa at the expense of the plaintive Berenice, took her back to Rome only to make game of her. It is time that the sons of Japheth paid this formidable reckoning of injuries to the daughters of Shem.

"A woman has taken it upon herself to reestablish the great Hegelian law of equilibrium, for the benefit of her sex. Separated from the Aryan world by the formidable precautions of Neptune, she draws the youngest and bravest to her. Her body is condescending, while her spirit is inexorable. She takes what these bold young men can give her. She lends them her body, while her soul dominates them. She is the first sovereign who has never been made the slave of passion, even for a moment. She has never been obliged to regain her self-mastery, for she never has lost it. She is the only woman who has been able to disassociate those two inextricable things, love and voluptuousness."

M. Le Mesge paused a moment and then went on.

"Once every day she comes to this vault. She stops before the niches; she meditates before the rigid statues; she touches the cold bosoms, so burning when she knew them. Then, after dreaming before the empty niche where the next victim soon will sleep his eternal sleep in a cold case of orichalc, she returns nonchalantly to where he is waiting for her."

The professor stopped speaking. The fountain again made itself heard in the midst of the shadow. My pulses beat, my head seemed on fire. A fever was consuming me.

"And all of them," I cried regardless of the place, "all of them complied? They submitted? Well, she has only to come and she will see what will happen."

Morhange was silent.

"My dear sir," said M. Le Mesge in a very gentle voice, "you are speaking like a child. You do not know. You have not seen Antinea. Let me tell you one thing: That among those—" and with a sweeping gesture he indicated the silent circle of statues—"there were men as courageous as you and perhaps less excitable. I remember one of them especially well, a phlegmatic Englishman who now is resting under Number 32. When he first appeared before Antinea he was smoking a cigar. And like all the rest he bent before the gaze of his sovereign.

"Do not speak until you have seen her. A university training hardly fits one to discourse upon matters of passion and I feel scarcely qualified myself to tell you what Antinea is. I only affirm this, that when you have seen her, you will remember nothing else. Family, country, honor—you will renounce everything for her."

"Everything?" asked Morhange in a calm voice.

"Everything," Le Mesge insisted emphatically. "You will forget all; you will renounce all."

From outside a faint sound came to us.

Le Mesge consulted his watch.

"In any case, you will see."

The door opened. A tall white Targa, the tallest we had yet seen in this remarkable abode, entered and came toward us.

He bowed and touched me lightly on the shoulder.

"Follow him," said M. Le Mesge.

Without a word I obeyed.

## CHAPTER XI

### ANTINEA

MY GUIDE and I passed along another long corridor. My excitement increased. I was impatient for one thing only, to come face to face with tnat woman, to tell her. So far as anything else was concerned, I already was done for.

I was mistaken in hoping that the adventure would take a heroic turn at once. In real life these contrasts are never definitely marked out. I should have remembered from many past incidents that the burlesque had been regularly mixed with the tragic in my life.

We reached a little transparent door. My guide stood aside to let me pass.

I found myself in the most luxurious of dressing-rooms. A ground glass ceiling diffused a gay, rosy light over the marble floor. The first thing I noticed was a clock fastened to the wall. In the place of the figures for the hours were the signs of the Zodiac. The small hand had not yet reached the sign of Capricorn.

Only three o'clock!

The day seemed to have lasted a century already. And only a little more than half of it was gone.

Another idea came to me and I laughed nervously.

"Antinea wants me to be at my best when I meet her."

A mirror of orichalc formed one whole side of the room. Glancing into it, I realized that in all decency there was nothing unusual in the demand.

My untrimmed beard, the frightful layer of dirt which lay about my eyes and furrowed my cheeks, my clothing, spotted by the clay of the Sahara and torn by the thorns of Ahaggar—all this made me appear a pitiable enough suitor.

I lost no time in undressing and plunging into the porphyry bath in the center of the room. A delicious drowiness came over me in that perfumed water. A thousand little jars spread on a costly carved-wood dressing-table danced before my eyes. They were of all sizes and colors, carved in a very transparent kind of jade. The warm humidity of the atmosphere hastened my relaxation.

I still had strength to think.

"The devil take Atlantis and the vault and Le Mesge."

Then I fell asleep in the bath.

WHEN I opened my eyes again the little hand of the clock had almost reached the sign of Taurus. Before me, his black hands braced on the edge of the bath, stood a huge negro, bare-faced and bare-armed, his forehead bound with an immense orange turban.

He looked at me and showed his white teeth in a silent laugh.

"Who is this fellow?"

The negro laughed harder. Without saying a word he lifted me like a feather out of the perfumed water, now of a color on which I shall not dwell.

In no time at all I was stretched out on an inclined marble table, and the negro began to massage me vigorously.

"More gently there, fellow!"

My masseur did not reply, but laughed and rubbed still harder.

"Where do you come from? Kanem? Torkou? You laugh too much for a Targa."

Unbroken silence. The negro was as speechless as he was hilarious.

"After all I am making a fool of myself," I said, giving up the case. "Such as he is, he is more agreeable than Le Mesge with his nightmarish erudition. But, on my word, what a recruit he would be for Hamman on the rue des Mathurins!"

"Cigaret, *sidi?*"

Without awaiting my reply he placed a cigaret between my lips, lighted it and resumed his task of polishing every inch of me.

"He doesn't talk much, but he is obliging," I thought, and I sent a puff of smoke into his face.

This pleasantry seemed to delight him immensely. He showed his pleasure by giving me great slaps.

When he had dressed me down sufficiently he took a little jar from the dressing-table and began to rub me with a rose-colored ointment. Weariness seemed to fly away from my rejuvenated muscles.

SUDDENLY there came a stroke on a copper gong. My masseur disappeared. A stunted old negress entered, dressed in the most tawdry tinsel. She was as talkative as a magpie, but at first I did not understand a word of the interminable string she unwound while she took first my hands, then my feet, and polished the nails with determined grimaces.

Another stroke on the gong followed. The old woman gave place to another negro, grave this time, and dressed all in white with a knitted skull-cap on his oblong head. It was the barber, and a remarkably dexterous one he was. He quickly trimmed my hair, and, on my word, it was well done. Then without asking me what style I preferred he shaved me clean.

I looked with pleasure at my face, once more visible.

"Antinea must like the American type," I thought. "What an affront to the memory of her worthy grandfather, Neptune."

The gay negro entered and placed a package on the divan. The barber disappeared. I was somewhat astonished to observe that the package, which my new valet opened carefully, contained a suit of white flannels exactly like those which French officers wear in Algeria in Summer.

The wide trousers seemed made to my measure. The tunic fitted without a wrinkle and my astonishment was unbounded at observing that it had even two gilt *galons*, the insignia of my rank, braided on the cuffs. For shoes there were slippers of red Morocco leather with gold ornaments. The underwear, all of silk, seemed to have come directly from the rue de la Paix.

"Dinner was excellent," I murmured, looking at myself in the mirror with satisfaction. "The apartment is perfectly arranged. Yes, but——"

I could not repress a shudder when I suddenly recalled that room of red marble.

The clock struck half past four.

Some one rapped gently on the door. The tall white Targa who had brought me appeared in the doorway.

He stepped forward, touched me on the arm and signed for me to follow.

Again I followed him.

We passed through interminable corridors. I was disturbed, but the warm water had given me a certain feeling of detachment. And above all, more than I wished to admit, I had a growing sense of lively curiosity. If at that moment some one had offered to lead me back to the route across the white plain near Sheikh-Salah, would I have accepted? Hardly.

I tried to feel ashamed of my curiosity. I thought of Maillefeu.

"He, too, followed this corridor. And now he is down there in the red marble vault."

I had no time to linger over this reminiscence. I was suddenly bowled over, thrown to the ground as if by a sort of meteor. The corridor was dark; I could see nothing. I heard only a mocking growl.

The white Targa had flattened himself back against the wall.

"Good," I mumbled, picking myself up; "the deviltries are beginning."

We continued on our way. A glow, different from that of the rose night-lights, soon began to light up the corridor.

We reached a high bronze door on which a strange lacy design had been cut in filigree. A clear gong sounded and the double doors opened part way. The Targa remained in the corridor, closing the doors after me.

I took a few steps forward mechanically, then paused, rooted to the spot, and rubbed my eyes.

I was dazzled by the sight of the sky.

Several hours of shaded light had unaccustomed me to daylight. It poured in through one whole side of the huge room.

The room was in the lower part of this mountain, which was more honeycombed with corridors and passages than an Egyptian pyramid. It was on a level with the garden which I had seen in the morning from the balcony and seemed to be a continuation of it; the carpet extended out under the great palm-trees and the birds flew about the forest of pillars in the room.

By contrast the half of the room untouched by direct light from the oasis seemed dark. The sun, sinking behind the mountain, painted the garden paths with rose and flamed with red upon the traditional flamingo which stood with one foot raised at the edge of the sapphire lake.

Suddenly I was bowled over a second time.

I felt a warm, silky touch, a burning breath on my neck. Again the mocking growl which had so disturbed me in the corridor.

With a wrench I pulled myself free and sent a chance blow at my assailant. The cry, this time of pain and rage, broke out again.

It was echoed by a long peal of laughter. Furious, I turned to look for the insolent onlooker, thinking to speak my mind. And then my glance became fixed.

Antinea was before me.

IN THE dimmest part of the room, under a kind of arch lit by the mauve rays from a dozen incense-lamps, four women lay on a heap of many-colored cushions and rare white Persian rugs.

I recognized the first three as Tuareg women, of a splendid regular beauty, dressed in magnificent robes of white silk embroidered in gold. The fourth, very dark-skinned, almost negroid, seemed younger. A tunic of red silk enhanced the dusk of her face, her arms and her bare feet. The four were grouped about a sort of throne of white rugs covered with a gigantic lion's skin on which, half-raised on one elbow, lay Antinea.

Antinea! Whenever I saw her after that I wondered if I had really looked at her before, so much more beautiful did I find her. More beautiful? Inadequate word. Inadequate language. But is it really the fault of the language or of those who abuse the word?

One could not stand before her without recalling the woman for whom Ephractœus overcame Atlas, of her for whom Sapor usurped the scepter of Ozymandias, for whom Mamylos subjugated Susa and Tentyris, for whom Antony fled.

*O tremblant cœur humain, si jamais tu vibras*
*C'est dans l'étreinte altière et chaude de ses bras.*

An Egyptian *klaft* fell over her abundant blue-black curls. Its two points of heavy, gold-embroidered cloth extended to her slim hips. The golden serpent, emerald-eyed, was clasped about her little, round, determined forehead, darting its double tongue of rubies over her head.

She wore a tunic of black chiffon shot with gold, very light, very full, slightly gathered in by a white muslin scarf embroidered with iris in black pearls.

That was Antinea's costume. But what was she beneath all this? A slim young girl with long green eyes and the slender profile of a hawk. A more intense Adonis. A child-queen of Sheba, but with a look, a smile such as no Oriental ever had. A miracle of irony and freedom.

I did not see her body. Indeed I should not have thought of looking at it had I had the strength. And that perhaps was the most extraordinary thing about that first impression. In that unforgettable moment nothing would have seemed to me more horribly sacrilegious than to think of the fifty victims in the red marble hall, of the fifty young men who had held that slender body in their arms.

She was still laughing at me.

"King Hiram!" she called.

I turned and saw my enemy.

On the capital of one of the columns, twenty feet above the floor, a splendid leopard was crouched. He still looked surly from the blow I had dealt him.

"King Hiram," Antinea repeated. "Come here!"

The beast relaxed like a spring released. He fawned at his mistress' feet. I saw his red tongue licking her bare ankles.

"Ask the gentleman's pardon," she said.

The leopard looked at me spitefully. The yellow skin of his muzzle puckered about his black mustache.

"*Fftt,*" he grumbled like a great cat.

"Go!" Antinea ordered imperiously.

The beast crawled reluctantly toward me. He laid his head humbly between his paws and waited.

I stroked his beautiful spotted forehead.

"You must not be vexed," said Antinea. "He is always that way with strangers."

"Then he must often be in bad humor," I said simply.

Those were my first words. They brought a smile to Antinea's lips.

She gave me a long, quiet look.

"Aguida," she said to one of the Targa women, "you will give twenty-five pounds in gold to Cegheir-ben-Cheikh.

"You are a lieutenant?" she asked after a pause.

"Yes."

"Where do you come from?"

"From France."

"I might have guessed that," she said ironically; "but from what part of France?"

"From what we call the Lot-et-Garonne."

"From what town?"

"From Duras."

She reflected a moment.

"Duras! There is a little river there, the Dropt, and a fine old château."

"You know Duras," I murmured, amazed.

"You go there from Bordeaux by a little branch railway," she went on. "It is a shut-in road, with vine-covered hills crowned by the feudal ruins. The villages have beautiful names: Monségur, Sauveterre-de-Guyenne, la Tresne, Créon—Créon, as in 'Antigone.' "

"You have been there?"

She looked at me.

"Don't speak so coldly," she said. "Sooner or later we will be intimate and you may as well lay aside formality now."

This threatening promise suddenly filled me with great happiness. I thought of Le Mesge's words:

"Don't talk until you have seen her. When you have seen her you will renounce everything for her."

"Have I been in Duras?" she went on with a burst of laughter. "You are joking. Imagine Neptune's granddaughter in the first-class compartment of a local train!"

She pointed to an enormous white rock which towered above the palm-trees of the garden.

"That is my horizon," she said gravely.

She picked up one of several books which lay scattered about her on the lion's skin.

"The time-table of the *Chemin de Fer de l'Ouest,*" she said. "Admirable reading for one who never budges. Here it is half-past five in the afternoon. A train, a local, arrived three minutes ago at Surgères in the Charente-Inférieure. It will start on in six minutes. In two hours it will reach La Rochelle. How strange it seems to think of such things here. So far away. So much commotion there. Here nothing changes."

"You speak French well," I said.

She gave a little nervous laugh.

"I have to—and German, too, and Italian and English and Spanish. My way of living has made me a great polyglot, but I prefer French, even to Tuareg and Arabian. It seems as if I had always known it, and I am not saying that to please you."

There was a pause. I thought of her grandmother, of whom Plutarch said:

"There were few races with which she needed an interpreter. Cleopatra spoke their own language to the Ethiopians, to the Troglodytes, the Hebrews, the Arabs, the Medes and the Persians."

"Do not stand rooted in the middle of the room. You worry me. Come and sit here beside me. Move over, King Hiram."

The leopard obeyed with good temper.

Beside her was an onyx bowl. She took from it a perfectly plain ring of orichalc and slipped it on my left ring-finger. I saw that she wore one like it.

"Tanit-Zerga, give M. de Saint-Avit a rose sherbet."

The dark girl in red silk obeyed.

"My private secretary," said Antinea, introducing her. "Mlle. Tanit-Zerga of Gâo on the Niger. Her family is almost as ancient as mine."

As she spoke she looked at me. Her green eyes seemed to be appraising me.

"And your comrade, the captain?" she asked in a dreamy tone. "I have not yet seen him. What is he like? Does he resemble you?"

For the first time since I had entered I thought of Morhange. I did not answer.

Antinea smiled.

She stretched herself out full length on the lionskin. Her bare right knee slipped out from under her tunic.

"It is time to go find him," she said

languidly. "You will soon receive my orders. Tanit-Zerga, show him the way. First take him to his room. He can not have seen it."

I rose and lifted her hand to my lips. She struck me with it so sharply as to make my lips bleed, as if to brand me as her possession.

I WAS in the dark corridor again. The young girl in the red silk tunic walked ahead of me.

"Here is your room," she said. "If you wish, I will take you to the dining-room. The others are about to meet there for dinner."

She spoke an adorable lisping French.

"No, Tanit-Zerga, I would rather stay here this evening. I am not hungry. I am tired."

"You remember my name," she said.

She seemed proud of it. I felt that in her I had an ally in case of need.

"I remember your name, Tanit-Zerga, because it is beautiful."* Then I added: "Now leave me, little one. I want to be alone."

It seemed as if she would never go. I was touched but at the same time vexed. I felt a great need of withdrawing into myself.

"My room is above yours," she said. "There is a copper gong on the table here. You have only to strike if you want anything. A white Targa will answer."

For a second these instructions amused me. I was in a hotel in the midst of the Sahara. I had only to ring for service.

I looked about my room. My room! For how long?

It was fairly large. There were cushions, a couch, an alcove cut into the rock—all lighted by a great window covered by a matting shade.

I went to the window and raised the shade. The light of the setting sun entered.

I leaned my elbows on the rocky sill. Inexpressible emotion filled my heart. The window faced southward. It was about two hundred feet above the ground. The black, polished volcanic wall yawned dizzily below me.

In front of me, perhaps a mile and a half away, was another wall, the first enclosure mentioned in the "Critias," and beyond it in the distance I saw the limitless red desert.

## CHAPTER XII

### MORHANGE DISAPPEARS

MY FATIGUE was so great that I lay as if unconscious until the next day. I awoke about three o'clock in the afternoon.

I thought at once of the events of the previous day; they seemed amazing.

"Let me see," I said to myself. "Let us work this out. I must begin by consulting Morhange."

I was ravenously hungry.

The gong which Tanit-Zerga had pointed out lay within arm's reach. I struck it. A white Targa appeared.

"Show me the way to the library," I ordered.

He obeyed. As we wound our way through the labyrinth of stairs and corridors I realized that I could never have found my way without his help.

Morhange was in the library, intently reading a manuscript.

"A lost treatise of Saint-Optat," he said. "Oh, if only Dom Granger were here."

I did not reply. My eyes were fixed on an object which lay on the table beside the manuscript. It was an orichalc ring exactly like that which Antinea had given me the previous day and the one which she herself wore.

Morhange smiled.

"Well?" I said.

"Well?"

"You have seen her?"

"I have indeed," Morhange replied.

"She is beautiful, is she not?"

"It would be difficult to dispute that," my comrade answered. "I even believe that I can say that she is as intelligent as she is beautiful."

There was a pause. Morhange was calmly fingering the orichalc ring.

"You know what our fate is to be?"

"I know. Le Mesge explained it to us yesterday in polite mythological terms. This evidently is an extraordinary adventure."

He was silent, then said, looking at me:

"I am very sorry to have dragged you here. The only mitigating feature is that since last evening you seem to have been bearing your lot very easily."

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* In Berber *tanit* means a spring; *zerga* is the feminine of the adjective *azreg*, blue. (Note by M. Leroux.)

Where had Morhange learned this insight into the human heart? I did not reply, thus giving him the best of proofs that he had judged correctly.

"What do you think of doing?" I finally murmured.

He rolled up the manuscript, leaned back comfortably in his armchair and lit a cigar.

"I have thought it over carefully. With the aid of my conscience I have marked out a line of conduct. The matter is clear and admits no discussion.

"The question is not quite the same for me as for you, because of my semireligious character which, I admit, has set out on a rather doubtful adventure. To be sure, I have not taken holy orders, but I admit that I have no taste for the kind of forced servitude for which the excellent Cegheir-ben-Cheikh has so kindly recruited us.

"That granted, the fact remains that my life is not my own with the right to dispose of it as might a private explorer traveling at his own expense and for his own ends. I have a mission to accomplish, results to obtain. If I could regain my liberty by paying the singular ransom which this country exacts, I should do so. I know the tolerance of the church and especially that of the order to which I aspire. The end justifies the means.

"But if I give in to the absurd caprices of this woman, that will not keep me from being catalogued down in the red marble hall as Number 54—or as Number 55 if she prefers to take you first. Under those conditions——"

"Under those conditions?"

"Under those conditions it would be unpardonable for me to acquiesce."

"Then what do you intend to do?"

"What do I intend to do?" Morhange leaned back in the armchair and smilingly launched a puff of smoke toward the ceiling.

"Nothing," he said. "And that is all that is necessary."

Then he added with an ironical smile—

"I can not be forced to accept unless I wish to."

I nodded.

"I tried the most subtle reasoning on Antinea," he continued. "It was breath wasted. 'But,' I said at the end of my arguments, 'why not Le Mesge?' She began to laugh.

" 'Why not the Rev. Mr. Spardek?' she replied. 'Le Mesge and Spardek are savants whom I respect. But—

" '*Maudit soit à jamais le rêveur inutile,*
*Qui voulut, le premier, dans sa stupidité,*
*S'éprenant d'un problème insoluble et stérile,*
*Aux choses de l'amour mêler l'honnêteté.*'

" 'Besides,' she added with that really very charming smile of hers, 'probably you have not looked carefully at either of them.'

"There followed several compliments on my figure, to which I found nothing to reply, so completely had she disarmed me by those four lines from Baudelaire.

"She condescended to explain further:

" 'Le Mesge is a learned gentleman whom I find useful. He knows Spanish and Italian, keeps my papers in order and is busy working out my genealogy. The Rev. Spardek knows English and German. Count Bielowsky is thoroughly conversant with the Slavic languages. Besides, I love him like a father. He knew me as a child when I had not dreamed such stupid things as you know of me. They are indispensable to me in my relations with visitors of different races, although I am beginning to get along well enough in the languages which I need.

" 'But I am talking a great deal and this is the first time that I have ever explained my conduct. Your friend is not so curious.'

"With that she dismissed me. A strange woman, indeed. I think there is a bit of Renan in her, but she is cleverer than that master of sensualism."

"GENTLEMEN," said Le Mesge, suddenly entering the room, "why are you so late? They are waiting dinner for you."

The little professor was in a particularly good humor that evening. He wore a new violet rosette.

"Well?" he said in a mocking tone. "You have seen her?"

Neither Morhange nor I replied.

The Rev. Mr. Spardek and the Hetman of Jitomir had already begun eating when we arrived. The setting sun threw raspberry lights on the cream-colored mat.

"Be seated, gentlemen," said Le Mesge noisily. "Lieutenant de Saint-Avit, you were not with us last evening. You are about to taste the cooking of Koukou, our Bambara chef, for the first time. You must give me your opinion of it."

A negro waiter set before me a superb fish covered with a pimento sauce as red as tomatoes.

I have explained that I was ravenously hungry. The dish was exquisite. The sauce immediately made me thirsty.

"White Ahaggar, 1879," the Hetman of Jitomir breathed in my ear as he filled my goblet with a clear topaz liquid. "I developed it myself. *Rien pour la tête, tout pour les jambes.*"

I emptied the goblet at a gulp. The company began to seem charming.

"Well, Captain Morhange," Le Mesge called out to my comrade, who had taken a mouthful of fish, "what do you say to this acanthopterygian? It was caught today in the lake in the oasis. Do you begin to admit the hypothesis of the Saharan sea?"

"The fish is an argument," my companion replied.

Suddenly he became silent. The door had opened. A white Targa entered. The diners stopped talking.

The veiled man walked slowly toward Morhange and touched his right arm.

"Very well," said Morhange.

He got up and followed the messenger.

The pitcher of Ahaggar, 1879, stood between me and Count Bielowsky. I filled my goblet—a goblet which held a pint—and gulped it down.

The hetman looked at me sympathetically.

"Ha, ha!" laughed Le Mesge, nudging me with his elbow. "Antinea has respect for the hierarchic order."

The Rev. Mr. Spardek smiled modestly.

"Ha, ha!" laughed Le Mesge again.

My glass was empty. For a moment I was tempted to hurl it at the head of the fellow in history. But what of it? I filled it and emptied it again.

"Morhange will miss this delicious roast of mutton," said the professor, more and more hilarious, as he awarded himself a thick slice of meat.

"He won't regret it," said the hetman crossly. "This is not roast; it is ram's horn. Really Koukou is beginning to make fun of us."

"Blame it on the reverend," the shrill voice of Le Mesge cut in; "I have told him often enough to hunt other proselytes and leave our cook alone."

"Professor," Spardek began with dignity.

"I maintain my contention!" cried Le Mesge, who seemed to me to be getting a bit overloaded. "I call the gentleman to witness," he went on, turning to me. "He has just come. He is unbiased. Therefore I ask him. Has one the right to spoil a Bambara cook by addling his head with theological discussions for which he has no predisposition?"

"Alas," the pastor replied sadly, "you are mistaken. He has only too strong a propensity to controversy."

"Koukou is a good-for-nothing who uses Colas' cow as an excuse for doing nothing and letting our scallops burn," declared the hetman. "Long live the Pope!" he cried, filling the glasses all round.

"I assure you that this Bambara worries me," Spardek went on with great dignity. "Do you know what he has come to? He denies transubstantiation. He is within an inch of the heresy of Zwingli and Œcolampades. Koukou denies transubstantiation."

"Sir," said Le Mesge, very much excited, "cooks should be left in peace."

"Exactly so," said the hetman approvingly.

He was holding a jar between his knees and trying to draw its cork.

"Oh, Côtes-Rôties, wine from the Côte-Rôtie," he murmured to me as he finally succeeded. "Touch glasses."

"Koukou denies transubstantiation," the pastor continued, sadly emptying his glass.

"Eh," said the Hetman of Jitomir in my ear, "let them talk on. Don't you see that they are quite drunk?"

His own voice was thick. He had the greatest difficulty in the world in filling my goblet to the brim. I wanted to push the pitcher away; then a thought came to me:

"At this very moment Morhange—Whatever he may say—she is so beautiful."

I reached out for the glass and emptied it once more.

Le Mesge and the pastor were now engaged in the most extraordinary religious controversy, throwing at each other's heads the "Book of Common Prayer," "The Declaration of the Rights of Man," and the "Unigenitus." Little by little the hetman began to show that ascendancy over them, which is the characteristic of a man of the world even when he is thoroughly drunk; the superiority of education over instruction. Count Bielowsky had drunk five times as much as the professor or the pastor, but he carried his wine ten times better.

"Let us leave these drunken fellows," he said with disgust. "Come on, old man. Our partners are waiting in the gaming-room."

"LADIES and gentlemen," said the hetman as we entered, "permit me to present a new player to you, my friend Lieutenant de Saint-Avit."

"Let it go at that," he murmured in my ear. "They are the servants, but I like to fool myself, you see."

I saw that he was very drunk indeed.

The gaming-room was very long and narrow. A huge table, almost level with the floor and surrounded with cushions on which a dozen natives were lying, was the chief aritcle of furniture. Two engravings on the wall gave evidence of the happiest broad-mindedness in taste; one of da Vinci's "St. John the Baptist," and another of the "Maison des Dernières Cartouches," by Alphonse de Neuville. On the table were earthenware goblets. A heavy jar held palm liqueur.

I recognized acquaintances among those present—my masseur, the manicure, the barber and two or three Tuareg who had lowered their veils and were gravely smoking long pipes. While waiting for something better all were plunged in the delights of a card game that looked like rams. Two of Antinea's beautiful ladies in waiting, Aguida and Sydya, were among the number. Their smooth bister skins gleamed beneath veils shot with silver. I was sorry not to see the red silk tunic of Tanit-Zerga. Again I thought of Morhange, but only for an instant.

"The chips, Koukou," demanded the hetman.

The Zwinglian cook placed a box of many-colored chips in front of him. Count Bielowsky set about counting them and arranging them in little piles with infinite care.

"The white are worth a louis," he explained to me. "The red, a hundred francs. The yellow, five hundred. The green, a thousand. Oh, it's the —— of a game that we play here. You will see."

"I open with ten thousand," said the Zwinglian cook.

"Twelve thousand," said the hetman.

"Thirteen," said Sydya with a slow smile as she began to arrange her chips lovingly in little piles.

"Fourteen," I said.

"Fifteen," said the sharp voice of Rosita, the old manicure.

"Seventeen," proclaimed the hetman.

"Twenty thousand," the cook broke in. He hammered on the table and, casting a defiant look at us, repeated—

"I take it at twenty thousand."

The hetman made an impatient gesture.

"That ——, Koukou! You can't do anything against the beast. You will have to play carefully, lieutenant."

Koukou had taken his place at the end of the table. He threw down the cards with an air which abashed me.

"I told you so—the way it was at Anna Deslions'," the hetman murmured proudly.

"Make your bets, gentlemen," yelped the negro. "Make your bets."

"Wait, you beast!" called Bielowsky. "Don't you see that the glasses are empty? Here, Cacambo!"

The goblets were filled immediately by the jolly masseur.

"Cut," said Koukou, addressing Sydya, the beautiful Targa who sat at his right.

The girl cut, like one who knows superstitions, with her left hand, but it must be said that her right was busy lifting a cup to her lips. I watched the curve of her beautiful throat.

"My deal," said Koukou.

We were thus arranged: At the left, the hetman; Aguida, whose waist he had encircled with the most aristocratic freedom; Cacambo; a Tuareg woman; then two veiled negroes who were watching the game intently. At the right, Sydya; myself; the old manicure, Rosita; Barouf, the barber; another woman and two white Tuareg, grave and attentive, exactly opposite those on the left.

"Give me one," said the hetman.

Sydya made a negative gesture.

Koukou drew, passed a four-spot to the hetman and gave himself a five.

"Eight," announced Bielowsky.

"Six," said pretty Sydya.

"Seven," broke in Koukou. "One card makes up for another," he added coldly.

"I double," said the hetman.

Cacambo and Aguida followed his example. On our side we were more careful. The manicure, especially, would not risk more than twenty francs at a time.

"I demand that the cards be evened up," said Koukou imperturbably.

"This fellow is unbearable," grumbled the count. "There, are you satisfied?"

Koukou dealt and laid down a nine.

"My country and my honor!" raged Bielowsky. "I had an eight."

I had two kings and so showed no ill temper. Rosita took the cards out of my hands.

I watched Sydya at my right. Her heavy black hair covered her shoulders. She was really very beautiful, though a bit tipsy, as were all that fantastic company. She looked at me, too, but with lowered eyelids, like a timid little wild animal.

"Oh," I thought, "she may well be afraid. I am labeled 'No trespassing.' "

I touched her foot. She drew it back in fright.

"Who wants cards?" Koukou demanded.

"Not I," said the hetman.

"Served," said Sydya.

The cook drew a four.

"Nine," he said.

"That card was meant for me," cursed the count. "And five, I had a five. If only I had never promised his Majesty, the Emperor Napoleon III, never to cut fives! There are times when it is hard, very hard. And look at that beast of a negro who plays Charlemagne."

It was true. Koukou swept in three-quarters of the chips, rose with dignity and bowed to the company.

"Till tomorrow, gentlemen."

"Get along, the whole pack of you!" howled the Hetman of Jitomir. "Stay with me, Lieutenant de Saint-Avit."

When we were alone he poured out another huge cupful of liqueur. The ceiling of the room was lost in the gray smoke.

"What time is it?" I asked.

"After midnight. But you are not going to leave me like this, my dear boy? I am heavy-hearted."

He wept bitterly. The tail of his coat spread out on the divan behind him like the apple-green wings of a beetle.

"Isn't Aguida a beauty?" he went on, still weeping. "She makes me think of the Countess de Teruel, though she is a little darker. You know the Countess de Tereul, Mercedes, who went in bathing nude at Biarritz in front of the Rock of the Virgin one day when Prince Bismarck was standing on the foot-bridge? You do not remember her? Mercedes de Teruel."

I shrugged my shoulders.

"I forget; you must have been too young. Two, perhaps three years old. A child. Yes, a child. Oh, my child, to have been of that generation and to be reduced to playing cards with savages. I must tell you——"

I stood up and pushed him off.

"Stay, stay," he implored. "I will tell you everything you want to know, how I came here, things I have never told any one. Stay. I must unbosom myself to a true friend. I will tell you everything, I repeat. I trust you. You are a Frenchman, a gentleman. I know that you will repeat nothing to her."

"That I will repeat nothing to her? To whom?"

His voice stuck in his throat. I thought I saw a shudder of fear pass over him.

"To her—to Antinea," he murmured.

I sat down again.

## CHAPTER XIII

### THE HETMAN OF JITOMIR'S STORY

COUNT CASIMIR had reached that stage where drunkenness takes on a kind of gravity, of regretfulness.

He thought a little, then began his story. I regret that I can not reproduce more perfectly its archaic flavor.

"When the grapes begin to color in Antinea's garden, I shall be sixty-eight. It is very sad, my dear boy, to have sowed all your wild oats. It isn't true that life is always beginning over again. How bitter to have known the Tuileries in 1860 and to have reached a point where I am now!

"One evening just before the war—I remember that Victor Black was still living—some charming women whose names I need not disclose—I read the names of their sons from time to time in the society news of the *Gaulois*—expressed to me their desire to rub elbows with some real *demi-mondaines* of the artist quarter. I took them to a ball at the *Grande Chaumière*.

"There was a crowd of young painters, models, students. In the midst of the uproar several couples danced the *cancan* till the chandeliers shook with it. We noticed especially a little dark man dressed in a miserable top-coat and checked trousers which assuredly knew the support of no suspenders. He was cross-eyed, with a wretched beard and hair as greasy as could be. He bounded and kicked extravagantly. The ladies called him Leon Gambetta.

"What an annoyance when I realize that I need only to have felled this wretched lawyer with one pistol shot to have guaranteed perfect happiness to myself and to my adopted country; for, my dear fellow, I am French at heart if not by birth.

"I was born in 1829 at Warsaw, of a Polish father and a Russian mother. It is from her that I hold my title of Hetman of Jitomir. It was restored to me by Czar Alexander II on a request made to him on his visit to Paris by my august master, Emperor Napoleon III.

"For political reasons, which I can not describe without retelling the history of unfortunate Poland, my father, Count Bielowsky, left Warsaw in 1830 and went to live in London. After the death of my mother he began to squander his immense fortune—from sorrow, he said. When, in his time, he died at the period of the Prichard affair, he left me barely a thousand pounds sterling of income, plus two or three systems of gaming, the impracticability of which I learned later.

"I will never be able to think of my nineteenth and twentieth years without emotion, for I then completely liquidated this small inheritance. London was indeed an adorable spot in those days. I had a jolly bachelor's apartment in Piccadilly.

"Piccadilly! Shops, palaces, bustle and breeze,
The whirling of wheels and the murmur of trees.

"Fox-hunting in a *briska*, driving a buggy in Hyde Park, the rout, not to mention the delightful little parties with the light Venuses of Drury Lane, these took all my time. All? I am unjust. There was also gaming, and a sentiment of filial piety forced me to verify the systems of the late count my father. It was gaming which was the cause of the event I must describe to you, by which my life was to be so strangely changed.

"My friend, Lord Malmesbury, had said to me a hundred times, 'I must take you to see an exquisite creature who lives in Oxford Street, number 277, a Miss Howard.' One evening I went with him. It was the twenty-second of February, 1848. The mistress of the house was really marvelously beautiful and the guests were charming. Besides Malmesbury, I observed several acquaintances: Lord Clebden, Lord Chesterfield, Sir Francis Mountjoye, a major in the Second Life Guards, and Count d'Orsay.

"They played cards and then began to talk politics. Events in France played the main part in the conversation and they discussed endlessly the consequences of the revolt that had broken out in Paris that same morning in consequence of the interdiction of the banquet in the Twelfth Arrondissement, of which word had just been received by telegram. Up to that time I had never bothered myself with public affairs, so I don't know what moved me to affirm with the impetuosity of my nineteen years that the news from France meant the republic next day and the empire the day after.

"The company received my sally with a discreet laugh and their looks were centered on a guest who made the fifth at a *bouillotte* table where they had just stopped playing.

"The guest smiled, too. He rose and came toward me. I observed that he was of middle height, perhaps even shorter, buttoned tightly into a blue frock coat, and that his eye had a far-off dreamy look.

"All the players watched this scene with delighted amusement.

" 'Whom have I the honor of addressing?' he asked in a very gentle voice.

" 'Count Bielowsky,' I answered coolly to show him that the difference in our ages was not sufficient to justfy the interrogation.

" 'Well, my dear count, may your prediction indeed be realized, and I hope that you will not neglect the Tuileries,' said the guest in the blue coat with a smile.

"And he added, finally consenting to present himself—

" 'Prince Louis-Napoleon Bonaparte.'

"I played no active rôle in the *coup d'état* and I do not regret it. It is a principle with me that a stranger should not meddle with the internal affairs of a country. The prince understood this discretion and did not forget the young man who had been of such good omen to him.

"I was one of the first whom he called to the *Elysée*. My fortune was definitely established by a defamatory note on 'Napoleon the Little.' The next year I was made gentleman of the chamber, and the emperor was even so kind as to have me marry the daughter of the Marshal Repeto, Duke of Mondovi.

"I have no scruple in announcing that this union was not what it should have been. The countess, who was ten years older than I, was crabbed and not particularly pretty. Moreover, her family had insisted resolutely on a marriage portion. Now I had nothing at this time except the twenty-five thousand livres for my appointment as gentleman of the chamber—a sad lot for any one on intimate terms with the Count d'Orsay and the Duke of Gramont-Caderousse. Without the kindness of the emperor where would I have been?

"ONE morning in the Spring of 1852 I was in my study opening my mail. There was a letter from his Majesty calling me to the Tuileries at four o'clock and a letter from Clémentine informing me that she expected me at five o'clock at her house. Clémentine was the beautiful one for whom just then I was ready to commit any folly. I was so proud of her that one evening at the *Maison Dorée* I flaunted her before Prince Metternich, who was tremendously taken with her. All the court envied me that conquest and I was morally obliged to continue to assume its expenses. And then Clémentine was so pretty!

"The other letters—good Lord—the other letters were the bills of the dressmakers of that young person, who in spite of my discreet remonstrances insisted on having them sent to my conjugal dwelling.

"There were bills for something over forty thousand francs; gowns and ball dresses from Gagelin-Opigez, 23 rue de Richelieu; hats and bonnets from Madame Alexandrine, 14 rue d'Antin; lingerie and many petticoats from Madame Pauline, 100 rue de Cléry; dress trimmings and gloves from the *Ville de Lyon*, 6 rue de la Chaussée d'Antin; foulards from the *Malle des Indes*; handkerchiefs from the Compagnie Irlandaise; laces from Ferguson; and cosmetics from Candés. This whitening-cream of Candés in particular overwhelmed me with stupefaction. The bill showed fifty-one flasks. Six hundred and twenty-seven francs and fifty centimes' worth of whitening-cream from Candés. Enough to soften the skin of a squadron of a hundred guards.

" 'This can't keep on,' I said, putting the bills in my pocket.

"At ten minutes to four I crossed the wicket by the Carrousel.

"In the salon of the *aides de camp* I happened on Bacciochi.

" 'The emperor has the grippe,' he said to me. 'He is keeping to his room. He has given orders to have you admitted as soon as you arrive. Come.'

"His Majesty, dressed in a braided vest and Cossack trousers, was meditating before a window. The pale green of the Tuileries showed luminously under a gentle warm shower.

" 'Ah! Here he is,' said Napoleon. 'Here, have a cigaret. It seems that you had great doings, you and Gramont-Caderousse, last evening at the *Château des Fleurs*.'

"I smiled with satisfaction.

" 'So your Majesty knows already.'

" 'I know; I know vaguely.'

" 'Do you know Gramont-Caderousse's last *mot?*'

" 'No, but you are going to tell it to me.'

" 'Here goes then. We were five or six—myself, Viel-Castel, Gramont, Persigny——'

" 'Persigny!' said the emperor. 'He has no right to associate with Gramont after all that Paris says about his wife.'

" 'Just so, sire. Well, Persigny was excited, no doubt, about it. He began telling us how troubled he was because of the duchess' conduct.'

" 'This Fialin isn't over tactful,' murmured the emperor.

" 'Just so, sire. Then, does your Majesty know what Gramont hurled at him?'

" 'What?'

"He said to him, '*Monsieur le Duc*, I forbid you to speak ill of my mistress before me.' "

" 'Gramont goes too far,' said Napoleon with a dreamy smile.

" 'That is what we all thought, including Viel-Castel, who was nevertheless delighted.' "

" 'Apropos of this,' said Napoleon after a silence, 'I have forgotten to ask you for news of the Countess Bielowsky.'

" 'She is very well, sire, I thank your Majesty.'

" 'And Clémentine? Still the same dear child?'

" 'Always, sire. But——'

" 'It seems that M. Baroche is madly in love with her.'

“ ‘I am very much honored, sire. But this honor becomes too burdensome.’

“I had drawn from my pocket that morning’s bills and I spread them out under the eyes of the emperor. He looked at them with his distant smile.

“ ‘Come, come. If that is all, I can fix that, since I have a favor to ask of you.’

“ ‘I am entirely at your Majesty’s service.’

“He struck a gong.

“ ‘Send for M. Mocquard.’

“ ‘ I have the grippe,’ he said. ‘Mocquard will explain the affair to you.’

“The emperor’s private secretary entered.

“ ‘Here is Bielowsky, Mocquard,’ said Napoleon. ‘You know what I want him to do. Explain it to him.’

“And he began to tap on the windowpane, against which the rain was beating furiously.

“ ‘My dear count,’ said Mocquard, taking a chair, ‘it is very simple. You have doubtless heard of a young explorer of promise, M. Henri Duveyrier.’

“I shook my head as a sign of negation, very much surprized at this beginning.

“ ‘M. Duveyrier,’ continued Mocquard, ‘has returned to Paris after a particularly daring trip to South Africa and the Sahara. M. Vivien de Saint-Martin, whom I have seen recently, has assured me that the Geographical Society intends to confer its great gold medal upon him in recognition of these exploits. In the course of his trip M. Duveyrier has entered into negotiations with the chiefs of the people who always have been so rebellious to his Majesty’s armies, the Tuareg.’

“I looked at the emperor. My bewilderment was such that he began to laugh.

“ ‘Listen,’ he said.

“ ‘M. Duveyrier,’ continued Mocquard, ‘was able to arrange to have a delegation of these chiefs come to Paris to present their respects to his Majesty. Very important results may arise from this visit, and his Excellency, the Colonial Minister, does not despair of obtaining the signature of a treaty of commerce, reserving special advantages to our fellow countrymen. These chiefs, five of them, among them Sheik Otham, *Amenokol* or Sultan of the Confederation of Adzger, arrive tomorrow morning at the *Gare de Lyon*. M. Duveyrier will meet them. But the emperor has thought that besides——’

“ ‘I thought,’ said Napoleon III, delighted by my bewilderment, ‘I thought that it would be correct to have some one of the gentlemen of my chamber wait upon the arrival of the Mussulman dignitaries. That is why you are here, my poor Bielowsky.

“ ‘Don’t be frightened,’ he added, laughing harder. ‘You will have M. Duveyrier with you. You are charged only with a special part of the reception: to accompany these princes to the luncheon that I am giving them tomorrow at the Tuileries; then in the evening, discreetly on account of their religious scruples, to succeed in giving them a very high idea of Parisian civilization, with nothing exaggerated. Do not forget that in the Sahara they are very high religious dignitaries. In that respect I have confidence in your tact and give you a *carte blanche*. Mocquard!’

“ ‘Sire?’ ”

“ ‘You will apportion on the budget—half to foreign affairs, half to the colonies—the funds Count Bielowsky will need for the reception of the Tuareg delegation. It seems to me that a hundred thousand francs to begin— The count has only to tell you if he is forced to exceed that figure.’

“CLÉMENTINE lived on the rue Baccador, in a little Moorish pavilion that I had bought for her from M. de Lesseps. I found her in bed. When she saw me she burst into tears.

“ ‘Great fools that we are!’ she murmured amid her sobs. ‘What have we done?’

“ ‘Clémentine, tell me!”

“ ‘What have we done, what have we done?’ she repeated, and I felt against me her floods of black hair and her warm cheek which was fragrant with *eau de Nanon*.

“ ‘What is it? What can it be?’

“ ‘It is—’ And she murmured something in my ear.

“ ‘No!’ I said, stupefied. ‘Are you quite sure?’

“ ‘I am quite sure.’

“ ‘I was thunderstruck.

“ ‘You don’t seem much pleased,’ she said sharply.

“ ‘I did not say that. Though really I am very much pleased, I assure you.’

“ ‘Prove it to me. Let us spend the day together tomorrow.’

“ ‘Tomorrow!’ I stammered. ‘Impossible!’

“ ‘Why?’ she demanded suspiciously.

" 'Because tomorrow I have to pilot the Tuareg mission about Paris—the emperor's orders.'

" 'What bluff is this?' asked Clémentine.

" 'I admit that nothing so much resembles a lie as the truth.'

"I retold Mocquard's story to Clémentine as well as I could. She listened to me with an expression that said, 'You can't fool me that way.'

" 'Finally, furious, I burst out:

" 'You can see for yourself. I am dining with them tomorrow and I invite you.'

" 'I shall be very pleased to come,' said Clémentine with great dignity.

"I admit that I lacked self-control at that minute. But think what a day it had been! Forty thousand francs of bills as soon as I woke up—the ordeal of escorting the savages around Paris all the next day, and quite unexpectedly the announcement of an approaching irregular paternity.

" 'After all,' I thought as I returned to my house, 'these are the emperor's orders He has commanded me to give the Tuareg an idea of Parisian civilization. Clémentine comports herself very well in society and just now it would not do to aggravate her. I will engage a room for tomorrow at the *Café de Paris* and tell Gramont-Caderousse and Viel-Castel to bring their silly mistresses. It will be very French to enjoy the attitude of these children of the desert in the midst of this little party.'

"The train from Marseilles arrived at 10:20. On the platform I found M. Duveyrier, a young man of twenty-three with blue eyes and a little blond beard. The Tuareg fell into his arms as they descended from the train. He had lived with them for two years, in their tents, the devil knows where. He presented me to their chief, Sheik Otham and to four others, splendid fellows in their blue cotton draperies and their amulets of red leather. Fortunately they all spoke a kind of *sabir*, * which helped things along.

"I only mention in passing the luncheon at the Tuileries, the visits in the evening to the museum, to the *Hôtel de Ville*, to the Imperial Printing-Press. Each time the Tuareg inscribed their names in the registry of the place they were visiting. It was interminable. To give you an idea, here is the complete name of Sheik Otham alone: Otham-ben-el-Hadj-el-Bekri-ben-el-Hadj-el-Faqqi-ben Mohammad-Bouya-ben-si-Ahmed-es-Souki-ben-Mahmoud.†

"And there were five of them like that!

"I maintained my good humor, however, because on the boulevards, everywhere, our success was colossal. At the *Café de Paris* at six-thirty it amounted to frenzy. The delegation, a little drunk, embraced me:

" '*Bono, Napoléon*; *bono, Eugénie*; *bono, Casimir; bono, Christians.*'

"Gramont-Caderousse and Viel-Castel were already in booth number eight with Anna Grimaldi, of the *Folies Dramatiques*, and Hortense Schneider, both beautiful enough to strike terror to the heart. But the palm was for my dear Clémentine when she entered.

"I must tell you how she was dressed: A gown of white tulle over China-blue tarletan with pleatings and ruffles of tulle over the pleatings. The tulle skirt was caught up on each side by garlands of green leaves mingled with rose-clusters. Thus it formed a valence which allowed the tarletan skirt to show in front and on the sides. The garlands were caught up to the belt and in the space between their branches were knots of rose-satin with long ends. The pointed bodice was draped with tulle; the billowy bertha of tulle was edged with lace. By way of head-dress she had placed upon her black locks a diadem of the same flowers. Two long leafy tendrils were twined in her hair and fell on her neck. As a cloak, she had a kind of scarf of blue cashmere embroidered in gold and lined with blue satin.

"So much beauty and splendor immediately moved the Tuareg and especially Clémentine's right-hand neighbor, El-Hadj-Ahmed-ben-Guemâma, brother of Sheik Otham and Sultan of Ahaggar. By the time the soup arrived, a bouillon of wild game seasoned with Tokay, he was already much smitten. When they served the compote of fruits Martinique *à la liqueur de Mme. Amphoux*, he showed every indication of illimitable passion. The Cyprian wine *de la Commanderie* made him quite sure of his sentiments.

"Hortense kicked my foot under the table. Gramont, intending to do the same to Anna, made a mistake and aroused the indignant protests of one of the Tuareg.

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* Dialect spoken in Algeria and the Levant—a mixture of Arabian, French, Italian and Spanish.

† I have succeeded in finding on the registry of the Imperial Printing-Press the names of the Tuareg chiefs and those who accompanied them on their visit, M. Henry Duveyrier and Count Bielowsky. (Note by M. Leroux.)

I can safely say that when the time came to go to Mabille, we were enlightened as to the manner in which our visitors respected the prohibition decreed by the Prophet in respect to wine.

"At Mabille, while Clémentine, Hortense, Anna, Ludovic and the three Tuareg gave themselves over to the wildest galops, Sheik Otham took me aside and confided to me with visible emotion a certain commission with which he had just been charged by his brother, Sheik Ahmed.

"THE next day very early I reached Clémentine's house.

" 'My dear,' I began after having waked her, not without difficulty, 'listen to me. I want to talk to you seriously.'

"She rubbed her eyes a bit crossly.

" 'How did you like that young Arabian gentleman who was so taken with you last night?'

" 'Why, well enough,' she said, blushing.

" 'Do you know that in his country he is the sovereign prince and reigns over territories five or six times greater than those of our august master, the Emperor Napoleon III?'

" 'He murmured something of that kind to me,' she said, becoming interested.

" 'Well, would it please you to mount a throne like our august sovereign, the Empress Eugénie?'

"Clémentine looked startled.

" 'His own brother, Sheik Otham, has charged me in his name to make this offer.'

"Clémentine, dumb with amazement, did not reply.

" 'I, Empress!' she finally stammered.

" 'The decision rests with you. They must have your answer before midday. If it is 'yes,' we lunch together at Voisin's and the bargain is made.'

"I saw that she had already made up her mind, but she thought it well to display a little sentiment.

" 'And you, you,' she groaned. "To leave you thus— Never!"

" 'No foolishness, dear child,' I said gently. 'You don't know perhaps that I am ruined. Yes, completely. I don't even know how I am going to pay for your complexion cream.'

" 'Ah,' she sighed. She added, however, 'And—the child?'

" 'What child?'

" 'Our child—our child.'

" 'Ah, that is so. Why, you will have to put it down to profit and loss. I am even convinced that Sheik Ahmed will find that it resembles him.'

" 'You can turn everything into a joke,' she said between laughing and crying.

"THE next morning at the same hour the Marseilles express carried away the five Tuareg and Clémentine. The young woman, radiant, was leaning on the arm of Sheik Ahmed, who was beside himself with joy.

" 'Have you many shops in your capital?' she asked him languidly.

"And he, smiling broadly under his veil, replied—

" '*Besef, besef, bono, roumis, bono.*'

"At the last moment Clémentine had a pang of emotion.

" 'Listen, Casimir, you have always been kind to me. I am going to be a queen. If you weary of it here promise me, swear to me——"

"The sheik had understood. He took a ring from his finger and slipped it on to mine.

" 'Sidi Casimir, comrade,' he affirmed, 'you come—find us. Take Sidi Ahmed's ring and show it. Everybody at Ahaggar comrades. *Bono* Ahaggar, *bono*.'

"When I came out of the *Gare de Lyon* I had the feeling of having perpetrated an excellent joke."

THE Hetman of Jitomir was completely drunk. I had had the utmost difficulty in understanding the end of his story because he interjected, every other moment, couplets from Jacques Offenbach's best score.

*Dans un bois passait un jeune homme,*
*Un jeune homme frais et beau,*
*Sa main tenait une pomme,*
*Vous voyez d'ici le tableau.*

"Who was disagreeably surprized by the fall of Sedan? It was Casimir, poor old Casimir. Five thousand louis to pay by the fifth of September and not the first sou, no, not the first sou. I take my hat and my courage and go to the Tuileries. No more emperor there, no. But the empress was so kind. I found her alone—ah, people scatter quickly under such circumstances—alone with a senator, M. Mérimée, the only literary man I have ever known who was at the same time a man of the world. 'Madame,' he was saying to her, 'you must give up all hope. M. Thiers, whom I just met on the *Pont Royal*, would listen to nothing.'

" 'Madame,' I said in my turn, 'your Majesty will always know where her true friends are.'

"And I kissed her hand.

*"Evohé, que les déesses*
*Ont de drôles de façons*
*Pour enjôler, pour enjôler, pour enjôler les*
*gaâar-çons!*

"I returned to my home in the rue de Lille. On the way I encountered the rabble going from the *corps législatif* to the *Hôtel de Ville*. My mind was made up.

" 'Madame,' I said to my wife, 'my pistols!'

" 'What is the matter?' she asked, frightened.

" 'All is lost. But there is still a chance to preserve my honor. I am going to be killed on the barricades.'

" 'Ah, Casimir,' she sobbed, falling into my arms. 'I have misjudged you. Will you forgive me?"

" 'I forgive you, Aurélie,' I said with dignified emotion. 'I have not always been right myself.'

"I tore myself away from this mad scene. It was six o'clock. On the rue du Bac I hailed a cab.

" 'Twenty francs tip,' I said to the coachman, 'if you get to the *Gare de Lyon* in time for the Marseilles train at six thirty-seven.' "

The Hetman of Jitomir could say no more. He had rolled over on the cushions and slept with clenched fists.

I walked unsteadily to the great window.

The sun was rising, pale yellow, behind the sharp blue mountains.

## CHAPTER XIV

### HOURS OF WAITING

IT WAS at night that Saint-Avit liked to tell me a little of his enthralling history. He gave it to me in short instalments, exact and chronological, never anticipating the episodes of a drama whose tragic outcome I knew already. Not that he wished to obtain more effect that way—I felt that he was far removed from any calculation of that sort. Simply from the extraordinary nervousness into which he was thrown by recalling such memories.

One evening the mail from France had just arrived. The letters that Chatelain had handed us lay upon the little table, not yet opened. By the light of the lamp, a pale halo in the midst of the great black desert, we were able to recognize the writing of the addresses. Oh, the victorious smile of Saint-Avit when, pushing aside all those letters, I said to him in a trembling voice—

"Go on."

He acquiesced without further words.

NOTHING can give you any idea of the fever I was in from the day when the Hetman of Jitomir told me of his adventures to the day when I found myself in the presence of Antinea. The strangest part was that the thought that I was in a way condemned to death did not enter into this fever. On the contrary it was stimulated by my desire for the event which would be the signal of my downfall—the summons from Antinea. But this summons was not speedy in coming, and from this delay arose my unhealthy exasperation.

Did I have any lucid moments in the course of these hours? I do not think so. I do not recall having even said to myself:

"What, aren't you ashamed? Captive in an unheard-of situation, you not only make no attempt to escape, but you even bless your servitude and look forward to your ruin."

I did not even color my desire to remain there, to enjoy the next step in the adventure, by the pretext I might have given—unwillingness to escape without Morhange. If I felt a vague uneasiness at not seeing him again, it was not because of a desire to know that he was well and safe.

Well and safe I knew him to be, moreover. The Tuareg slaves of Antinea's household were certainly not very communicative. The women were hardly more loquacious. I heard, it is true, from Sydya and Aguida that my companion liked pomegranates or that he could not endure *kouskous* of bananas, but if I asked for a different kind of information they fled in fright down the long corridors. With Tanit-Zerga it was different. This child seemed to have a distaste for mentioning before me anything bearing in any way upon Antinea. Nevertheless I knew that she was devoted to her mistress with a dog-like fidelity, but she maintained an obstinate silence if I pronounced her name or, persisting, the name of Morhange.

As for the Europeans I did not care to question these sinister puppets. Besides, all three were difficult of approach. The Hetman of Jitomir was sinking deeper and deeper into alcohol. What intelligence remained to him seemed to have dissolved that evening when he had invoked his youth for me. I met him from time to time in the corridors that had become all at once too narrow for him, humming in a thick voice a couplet from the music of *La Reine Hortense*:

*"De ma fille Isabelle*
*Sois l'époux à l'instant,*
*Car elle est la plus belle*
*Et toi, le plus vaillant."*

As for Spardek I would cheerfully have killed the old skinflint. And the hideous little man with the decorations, the placid printer of labels for the red marble hall—how could I meet him without wanting to cry out in his face:

"Eh, eh, sir professor, a very curious case of apocope: Atlantinea — suppression of alpha, of tau, of lambda. I would like to direct your attention to another case as curious: Klemantinea (Clémentine)—apocope of kappa, of lambda, of epsilon and of mu. If Morhange were with us he would tell you many charming erudite things about it. But alas, Morhange does not deign to come among us any more. We never see Morhange."

My fever for information found more relief from Rosita, the old negress manicurist. Never have I had my nails polished so often as during those days of waiting. Now—after six years—she must be dead. I shall not wrong her memory by recording that she was very partial to the bottle. The poor old soul was defenseless against those that I brought her and that I emptied with her through politeness.

Unlike the other slaves, who are brought from the south toward Turkey by the merchants of Rhat, she was born in Constantinople and had been brought into Africa by her master when he became *kaimakam* of Rhadames.

But don't let me complicate this already wandering history by the incarnations of this manicurist.

"ANTINEA," she said to me, "is the daughter of El-Hadj-Ahmed-ben-Guemâma, Sultan of Ahaggar and sheik of the great and noble tribe of Kel-Rhela. She has never wished to marry any one. Her wish has been respected, for the will of women is sovereign in this Ahaggar where she rules today. She is a cousin of Sidi-el-Senussi and, if she speaks the word, Christian blood will flow from Djerid to Tuat, and from Tchad to Senegal. If she had wished it she might have lived, beautiful and respected, in the land of the Christians, but she prefers to have them come to her."

"Cegheir-ben-Cheikh," I said, "do you know him? He is entirely devoted to her?"

"Nobody here knows Cegheir-ben-Cheikh very well because he is continually traveling. It is true that he is entirely devoted to Antinea. Cegheir-ben-Cheikh is a Senussi and Antinea is the cousin of the chief of the Senussi. Besides, he owes his life to her. He is one of the men who assassinated the great Kébir Flatters. On account of that, Ikenoukhen, *Amenokol* of the Adzjer Tuareg, fearing French reprisals, wanted to deliver Cegheir-ben-Cheikh to them. When the whole Sahara turned against him, he found asylum with Antinea. Cegheir-ben-Cheikh will never forget it, for he is brave and observes the law of the Prophet. To thank her he led to Antinea, who was then twenty years old, three French officers of the first troops of occupation in Tunis. They are the ones who are numbered, in the red marble hall, 1, 2, and 3."

"And Cegheir-ben-Cheikh has always fulfilled his duties successfully?"

"Cegheir-ben-Cheikh is well trained and he knows the vast Sahara as I know my little room at the top of the mountain. At first he made mistakes. That is how, on his first trips, he brought back old Le Mesge and the *marabout*, Spardek."

"What did Antinea say when she saw them?"

"Antinea? She laughed so hard that she spared them. Cegheir-ben-Cheikh was vexed to see her laugh so. Since then he has never made a mistake."

"He has never made a mistake?"

"No. I have cared for the hands and feet of all that he has brought here. All were young and handsome, but I think that your comrade, whom they brought to me the other day after you were here, is the handsomest of all."

"Why," I asked, turning the conversation, "why, since she spared them their lives, did she not free the pastor and M. Le Mesge?"

"She has found them useful, it seems," said the old woman. "And then, whoever once enters here can never leave. Otherwise the French would soon be here, and when they saw the hall of red marble they would massacre everybody. Besides, of all those whom Cegheir-ben-Cheikh has brought here only one has wished to escape after seeing Antinea."

"She keeps them a long time?"

"That depends upon them—two months—three months on the average—it depends. Douglas Kaine, an English officer, she kept almost a year."

"And then?"

"And then he died," said the old woman as if astonished at my question.

"Of what did he die?"

She used the same phrase as M. Le Mesge.

"Like all the others—of love.

"Of love," she continued. "They all die of love when they see that their time is ended and that Cegheir-ben-Cheikh has gone to find others. Several have died quietly with tears in their great eyes. They neither ate nor slept any more. A French naval officer went crazy. All night he sang a sad song of his native country, a song which echoed through the whole mountain. Another, a Spaniard, was as if maddened—he tried to bite. It was necessary to kill him. Many have died of *kif*, a *kif* that is more violent than opium. When they no longer have Antinea they smoke, smoke. Most have died that way—the happiest. Little Kaine died differently."

"How did little Kaine die?"

"In a way that pained us all very much. I told you that he stayed longer among us than any one else. We had become used to him. In Antinea's room, on a little Kairoun table painted in blue and gold, there is a gong and a long silver hammer with an ebony handle, very. heavy. Aguida told me about it. When Antinea gave little Kaine his dismissal, smiling as she always does, he stopped in front of her, mute and very pale. She struck the gong for some one to take him away. A Targa slave came, but little Kaine had leaped for the hammer and the Targa lay on the ground with his skull smashed. Antinea smiled all the time.

"They led little Kaine to his room. The same night, eluding guards, he jumped out of his window at a height of two hundred feet. The workmen in the embalming-room told me that they had the greatest difficulty with his body, but they succeeded very well. You have only to see for yourself. He occupies niche number 26 in the red marble hall."

The old woman drowned her emotion in her glass.

"Two days before," she continued, "I had done his nails here, for this was his room. On the wall near the window he had written something in the stone with his knife. See, it is still here."

Was it not fate that on this July midnight——

At any other moment that verse, traced in the stone of the window through which the English officer had hurled himself, would have filled me with overpowering emotion, but just then another thought was in my heart.

"Tell me," I said, controlling my voice as well as I could, "when Antinea holds one of us in her power she shuts him up near her, does she not? Nobody sees him any more?"

The old woman shook her head.

"She is not afraid that he will escape. The mountain is well guarded. Antinea has only to strike her silver gong; he will be brought back to her immediately."

"But my companion. I have not seen him since she sent for him."

The negress smiled comprehendingly.

"If you have not seen him it is because he prefers to remain near her. Antinea does not force him to. Neither does she prevent him."

I struck my fist violently upon the table.

"Get along with you, old fool, and be quick about it!"

Rosita fled frightened, hardly taking time to collect her little instruments.

WAS it not fate that on this July midnight——

I obeyed the negress' suggestion. Following the corridors, losing my way, set on the right road again by the Rev. Mr. Spardek, I pushed open the door of the red marble hall. I entered.

The freshness of the perfumed crypt did

me good. No place can be so sinister that it is not, as it were, purified by the murmur of running water. The cascade, gurgling in the middle of the hall, comforted me. One day before an attack I was lying with my section in deep grass, waiting for the moment, the blast of the bugle, which would demand that we leap forward into the hail of bullets. A stream was at my feet. I listened to its fresh rippling. I admired the play of light and shade in the transparent water, the little black fish, the green grass, the yellow wrinkled sand. The mystery of water has always carried me out of myself.

Here in this magic hall my thoughts were held by the dark cascade. It felt friendly. It kept me from faltering in the midst of these rigid evidences of so many monstrous sacrifices. Number 26. It was he all right. Lieutenant Douglas Kaine, born at Edinburgh September 21, 1862. Died at Ahaggar July 16, 1890. Twenty-eight. He wasn't even twenty-eight!

His face was thin under the coat of orichalc. His mouth was sad and passionate. It was certainly he. Poor youngster! Edinburgh—I knew Edinburgh without ever having been there. From the wall of the castle you can see the Pentland hills. "Look a little lower down," said Stevenson's sweet *Miss Flora* to *Anne of Saint Ives*, "look a little lower down and you will see, in the fold of the hill, a clump of trees and a curl of smoke that rises from among them. That is Swanston cottage where my brother and I live with my aunt. If it really pleases you to see it, I shall be glad." When he left for Darfour, Douglas Kaine must surely have left in Edinburgh a *Miss Flora*, as blond perhaps as *Saint Ives' Flora*. But what are these slips of girls beside Antinea!

Kaine, however sensible a mortal, however made for this kind of love, had loved otherwise. He was dead. And here was number 27, on account of whom Kaine dashed himself on the rocks of the Sahara and who in his turn is dead also.

"To die, to love."

How naturally the words resounded in the red marble hall. How Antinea seemed to tower above that circle of pale statues. Does love, then, need so much death in order that it may be multiplied? Other women in other parts of the world are doubtless as beautiful as Antinea, more beautiful perhaps. I hold you to witness that I have not said much about her beauty. Why, then, this obsession, this fever, this consumption of all my being? Why am I ready, for the sake of pressing this quivering form within my arms for one instant, to face things that I dare not think of for fear I should tremble before them?

Here is number 53, the last. Morhange will be 54. I shall be 55. In six months, eight perhaps—what difference anyway?—I shall be hoisted into this niche, an image without eyes, a dead soul, a finished body.

I touched the heights of bliss. What a child I was just now. I lost my temper with a negro manicurist. I was jealous of Morhange, on my word. Why not, since I was at it, be jealous of those here present; then of the others, the absent, who will come, one by one, to fill the black circle of the still-empty niches?

Morhange, I know, is at this moment with Antinea, and it is to me a bitter and splendid joy to think of his joy, but some evening, in three months—four perhaps—the embalmers will come here. Niche 54 will receive its prey. Then a Targa slave will advance toward me. He will touch my arm, and it will be my turn to penetrate into eternity by the bleeding door of love.

WHEN I emerged from my meditation I found myself back in the library where the falling night obscured the shadows of the people who were assembled there.

I recognized M. Le Mesge, the pastor, the hetman, Aguida, two Tuareg slaves and still others, all joining in the most animated conference.

I drew nearer, astonished, even alarmed, to see so many people together who ordinarily felt no kind of sympathy for each other.

An unheard-of occurrence had thrown all the people of the mountain into an uproar.

Two Spanish explorers from Rio de Oro had been seen to the west, in Adhar Ahnet.

As soon as Cegheir-ben-Cheikh was informed he had prepared to go to meet them, but at that instant he had received the order to do nothing.

Henceforth it was impossible to doubt. For the first time Antinea was in love.

## CHAPTER XV

### THE LAMENT OF TANIT-ZERGA

*ARRAOU! Arraou!*

I roused myself vaguely from the half-sleep to which I had finally succumbed. I half-opened my eyes. Immediately I flattened back.

*Arraou!*

Two feet from my face was the muzzle of King Hiram, yellow with a tracery of black. The leopard was helping me to wake up; otherwise he took little interest, for he yawned; his dark red jaws with their beautiful, gleaming white fangs opened and closed lazily.

At the same moment I heard a burst of laughter.

It was little Tanit-Zerga. She was crouching on a cushion near the divan where I was stretched ou , curiously watching my close interview with the leopard.

"King Hiram was bored," she felt obliged to explain to me. "I brought him."

"How nice," I growled. "Only tell me, could he not have gone somewhere else to be amused?"

"He is all alone now," said the girl. "They have sent him away. He made too much noise when he played."

These words recalled to me the events of the previous evening.

"If you like I will make him go away," said Tanit-Zerga.

"No, let him alone."

I looked at the leopard with sympathy. Our common misfortune brought us together.

I even caressed his rounded forehead. King Hiram showed his contentment by stretching out at full length and uncurling his great amber claws.

"Galé is here, too," said the little girl.

"Galé! Who may he be?"

At the same time I saw on Tanit-Zerga's knees a strange animal about the size of a big cat, with flat ears and a long muzzle. Its pale gray fur was rough. It was watching me with queer little pink eyes.

"It is my mongoos," explained Tanit-Zerga.

"Come now," I said sharply, "is that all?"

I must have looked very crabbed and ridiculous for Tanit-Zerga began to laugh. I laughed, too.

"Galé is my friend," she said when she was serious again. "I saved her life. It was when she was quite little. I will tell you about it some day. See how good-natured she is."

So saying, she dropped the mongoos on my knees.

"It is very nice of you, Tanit-Zerga," I said, "to come and pay me a visit." I passed my hand slowly over the animal's back. "What time is it now?"

"A little after nine. See, the sun is already high. Let me draw the shade."

The room was in darkness. Galé's eyes grew redder. King Hiram's became green.

"It is very nice of you," I repeated, pursuing my idea. "I see that you are free today. You never came so early before."

A shade passed over the girl's forehead.

"Yes, I am free," she said almost bitterly.

I looked at Tanit-Zerga more closely. For the first time I realized that she was beautiful. Her hair, which she wore falling over her shoulders, was not so much curly as it was gently waving. Her features were of remarkable fineness; the nose very straight, a small mouth with delicate lips, a strong chin. She was not black, but copper-colored. Her slender, graceful body had nothing in common with the disgusting thick sausages which the carefully cared-for bodies of the blacks become.

A large circle of copper made a heavy decoration around her forehead and hair. She had four bracelets, still heavier, on her wrists and ankles, and for clothing a green silk tunic, slashed in points and braided with gold—green, bronze, gold.

"You are a Sonrhaï, Tanit-Zerga?" I asked gently.

She replied with almost ferocious pride—

"I am a Sonrhaï."

"Strange little thing," I thought.

Evidently this was a subject on which Tanit-Zerga did not intend the conversation to turn. I recalled how, almost painfully, she had pronounced that "they," when she had told me how they had driven away King Hiram.

"I am a Sonrhaï," she repeated. "I was born at Gâo, on the Niger, the ancient Sonrhaï capital. My fathers reigned over the great Mandigue Empire. You need not scorn me because I am here as a slave."

In a ray of sunlight Galé, seated on his little haunches, washed his shining mustaches with his forepaws, and King Hiram, stretched out on the mat, groaned plaintively in his sleep.

"He is dreaming," said Tanit-Zerga, a finger on her lips.

There was a moment of silence. Then she said—

"You must be hungry, and I do not think that you will want to eat with the others."

I did not answer.

"You must eat," she continued. "If you like I will go get something to eat for you and me. I will bring King Hiram's and Galé's dinner here, too. When you are sad you should not stay alone."

The little green-and-gold fairy vanished without waiting for my answer.

THAT was how my friendship with Tanit-Zerga began. Each morning she came to my room with the two beasts. She rarely spoke to me of Antinea and when she did it was always indirectly. The question that she saw ceaselessly hovering on my lips seemed to be unbearable to her and I felt her avoiding all the subjects toward which I myself dared not direct the conversation. To make sure of avoiding them she prattled, prattled, prattled, like a nervous little parrakeet.

I was sick and this sister of charity in green-and-bronze silk tended me with such care as never was before. The two wild beasts, the big and the little, were there, each side of my couch, and during my delirium I saw their mysterious, sad eyes fixed on me.

In her melodious voice Tanit-Zerga told me wonderful stories and among them the one she thought most wonderful, the story of her life.

It was not till much later, very suddenly, that I realized how far this little barbarian had penetrated into my own life. Wherever thou art at this hour, dear little girl, from whatever peaceful shores thou watchest my tragedy, cast a look at thy friend, pardon him for not having accorded thee, from the very first, the gratitude that thou deservedest so richly.

"I remember from my childhood," she said, "the vision of a yellow-and-rose colored sun rising through the morning mists over the smooth waves of a great river, 'the river where there is water;' the Niger, it was. But you are not listening to me."

"I am listening to you. I swear it, little Tanit-Zerga."

"You are sure I am not wearying you? You want me to go on"

"Go on, little Tanit-Zerga, go on."

"Well, with my little companions, of whom I was very fond, I played at the edge of the river where there is water, under the jujube-trees, brothers of the *zeg-zeg*, the spines of which pierced the head of your Prophet and which we call 'the tree of Paradise' because our prophet told us that under it would live those chosen of Paradise.* It is sometimes so big—so big that a horseman can not traverse its shade in a century.

"There we wove beautiful garlands with mimosa, the pink flowers of the caper-bush and white cockles. Then we threw them in the green water to ward off evil spirits, and we laughed like mad things when a great snorting hippopotamus raised his swollen head, and we bombarded him in glee until he had to plunge back again with a tremendous splash.

"That was in the mornings. Then there fell on Gâo the death-like lull of the red siesta. When that was finished we came back to the edge of the river to see the enormous crocodiles with bronze goggle-eyes creep along, little, by little, among the clouds of mosquitoes and day-flies on the banks, and work their way into the yellow ooze of the mud-flats.

"Then we bombarded them, as we had done the hippopotamus in the morning. To fête the sun setting behind the black branches of the *douldouls* we made a circle, stamping our feet, then clapping our hands as we sang the Sonrhaï hymn.

"Such were the ordinary occupations of free little girls; but you must not think that we were only frivolous, and I will tell you, if you like, how I, who am talking to you, saved a French chieftain who must be vastly greater than yourself, to judge by the number of gold ribbons he had on his white sleeves."

"Tell me, little Tanit-Zerga," I said, my eyes elsewhere.

"YOU have no right to smile," she said, a little aggrieved, "and to pay no attention to me. But never mind; it is for myself that I tell these things, for the sake of recollection.

"Above Gâo the Niger makes a bend. There is a little promontory over the river, thickly covered with large gum-trees. It was an evening in August and the sun was sinking. Not a bird in the forest but had gone to rest, motionless until the morning.

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* The Koran, Chapter 66, verse 17. (Note by M. Leroux.)

"Suddenly we heard an unfamiliar noise in the west—*boum-boum, boum-boum, boum-baraboum, boum-boum*—growing louder—*boum-boum, boum-baraboum*—and suddenly there was a great flight of water-birds, aigrets, pelicans, wild ducks and teal, which scattered over the gum-trees and were followed by a column of black smoke which was scarcely flurried by the breeze that was springing up.

"It was a gunboat turning the point, sending out a wake that shook the overhanging bushes on each side of the river. One could see that the red, white and blue flag on the stern had drooped till it was dragging in the water, so heavy was the evening.

"She stopped at the little point of land. A small boat was let down, manned by two native soldiers who rowed and three chiefs who soon leaped ashore.

"The eldest, a French *marabout* with a great white burnoose, who knew our language marvelously, asked to speak to Sheik Sonni-Azkia. When my father advanced and told him that it was he, the *marabout* told him that the commandant of the club at Timbuctoo was very angry; that a mile from there the gunboat had run on an invisible pile of logs, and that she had sprung a leak so that she could not continue her voyage toward Ansango.

"My father replied that the French, who protected the poor natives against the Tuareg, were welcome; that it was not from evil design but for fish that they had built the barrage; and that he put all the resources of Gâo for repairing the gunboat, including the forge, at the disposition of the French chief.

"While they were talking the French chief looked at me and I looked at him. He was already middle-aged, tall, with shoulders a little bent and blue eyes as clear as the stream whose name I bear.

" 'Come here, little one,' he said in his gentle voice.

" 'I am the daughter of Sheik Sonni-Azkia and I do only what I wish,' I replied, vexed at his informality.

" 'You are right,' he answered, smiling, 'for you are pretty. Will you give me the flowers that you have around your neck?'

"It was a great necklace of purple hibiscus. I held it out to him. He kissed me. The peace was made.

"Meantime, under the direction of my father, the native soldiers and strong men of the tribe had hauled the gunboat into a pocket of the river.

" 'There is work there for all day tomorrow, colonel,' said the chief mechanic after inspecting the leaks. 'We won't be able to get away before the day after tomorrow. And if we're to do that these lazy soldiers mustn't loaf on the job.'

" 'What an awful bore,' groaned my new friend.

"But his ill-humor did not last long, so ardently did my little companions and I seek to distract him. He listened to our most beautiful songs, and, to thank us, made us taste the good things that had been brought from the boat for his dinner. He slept in our great cabin, which my father gave up to him, and for a long time before I went to sleep I looked through the cracks of the cabin where I lay with my mother and gazed at the lights of the gunboat, trembling in red ripples on the surface of the dark waves.

"That night I had a frightful dream. I saw my friend, the French officer, sleeping in peace, while a great crow hung croaking above his head:

" '*Caw, caw*—the shade of the gum-trees of Gâo—*caw, caw*—will avail nothing tomorrow night—*caw, caw*—to the white chief nor to his escort.'

"Dawn had scarcely come when I went to find the native soldiers. They were stretched out on the bridge of the gunboat, taking advantage of the fact that the whites were still sleeping.

"I approached the eldest and spoke to him with authority:

" 'I saw the black crow in a dream last night. He told me that the shade of the gum-trees of Gâo would be fatal to your chief in the coming night.'

"And as they all remained motionless, stretched out, gazing at the sky without even seeming to have heard, I added—

" 'And to his escort.'

"IT WAS the hour when the sun was highest. The colonel was eating in the cabin with the other Frenchmen when the chief mechanic entered.

" 'I don't know what has come over the natives. They are working like angels. If they keep on this way, colonel, we shall be able to leave this evening.'

" 'Very good,' said the colonel; 'but don't let them spoil the job by too much haste. We don't have to be at Ansango before the end of the week. It will be better to start in the morning.'

"I trembled. Suppliantly I approached and told him the story of my dream. He listened with a smile of astonishment; then at the last he said gravely:

" 'It is agreed, little Tanit-Zerga. We will leave this evening if you wish it.'

"And he kissed me.

"The darkness had already fallen when the gunboat, now repaired, left the harbor. My friend stood in the midst of the group of Frenchmen, who waved their caps as long as we could see them. Standing alone on the jetty, I waited, watching the water flow by, until the last sound of the steam-driven vessel—*boum-baraboum*—had died away into the night.*

"That was the last night of Gâo. While I was sleeping and the moon was still high above the forest a dog yelped, but only for an instant. Then came the cry of men, then of women, the kind of cry that you can never forget once heard.

"When the sun rose it found me, quite naked, running and stumbling with my little companions toward the north, beside the swiftly moving camels of the Tuareg who escorted us. Behind followed the women of the tribe, my mother among them, two by two, the yoke upon their necks. There were not many men. Almost all lay with their throats cut under the ruins of the thatch of Gâo beside my father, brave Sonni-Azkia. Once again Gâo had been razed by a band of Awellimiden, who had come to massacre the French on their gunboat.

"The Tuareg hurried us, for they were afraid of being pursued. We traveled thus for ten days, and as the millet and hemp disappeared the march became frightful. Finally near Isakeryen, in the country of Kidal, the Tuareg sold us to a caravan of Trarzan Moors who were going from Bamrouk to Rhat. At first, because they went more slowly, this seemed good fortune, but before long the desert was an expanse of rough pebbles, and the women began to fall. As for the men, the last of them had died far back under the blows of the stick for having refused to go farther.

"I still had the strength to keep going and even to keep as far in the lead as possible, so as not to hear the cries of my little playmates. Each time one of them fell by the way, unable to rise again, one of the drivers would descend from his camel and drag her into the bushes a little way to cut her throat.

"One day I heard a cry that made me turn around. It was my mother. She was kneeling, holding out her poor arms to me. In an instant I was beside her, but a great Moor dressed in white separated us. A red morocco case hung around his neck from a black chaplet. He drew a cutlas from it. I can still see the blue steel against the brown skin. Another horrible cry. An instant later, driven by a club, I was trotting ahead, swallowing my little tears, trying to regain my place in the caravan.

"Near the wells of Asiou the Moors were attacked by a party of Tuareg of Kel-Tazeholet, serfs of the great tribe of Kel-Rhela which rules over Ahaggar. The Moors in their turn were massacred to the last man. That is how I was brought here and offered as homage to Antinea, who was pleased with me and ever since has been kind to me. That is why it is no slave who soothes your fever today with stories that you do not even listen to, but the last descendant of the great Sonrhaï emperors, of Sonni-Ali, the destroyer of men and of countries, of Mohammed Azkia, who made the pilgrimage to Mecca, taking with him fifteen hundred cavaliers and three hundred thousand mithkal of gold. That was in the days when our power stretched without rival from Chad to Tuat and to the Western Sea, and when Gâo raised her cupola, sister of the sky, above the other cities, higher above her rival cupolas than is the tamarisk above the humble sorghum."

## CHAPTER XVI

### THE SILVER HAMMER

*Je ne m'en défends plus et je ne veux qu' aller,*
*Reconnaître la place où jé dois l'immoler,*
Andromaque.

IT WAS this sort of night when what I am going to tell you now, happened. Toward five o'clock the sky clouded over and a sense of the coming storm trembled in the stifling air.

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* Cf. the records and the *Bulletin de la Société de Géographie de Paris* (1897) for the cruises on the Niger, made by the commandant of the Timbuctoo region, Colonel Joffre, Lieutenant Baudry and Bluset, and by Father Hacquart of the White Fathers. (Note by M. Leroux.)

I shall always remember it. It was the fifth of January, 1897.

King Hiram and Galé lay on the matting in my room. Leaning on my elbows beside Tanit-Zerga in the rock-hewn window, I spied the advance tremors of lightning.

One by one they rose, streaking the darkness with their bluish stripes, but no burst of thunder followed. The storm did not attain the peaks of Ahaggar. It passed without breaking, leaving us in our gloomy bath of perspiration.

"I am going to bed," said Tanit-Zerga.

I have said that her room was above mine. Its bay window was some thirty feet above that before which I lay.

She took Galé in her arms, but King Hiram would have none of it. Digging his four paws into the matting, he whined in anger and uneasiness.

"Leave him," I finally said to Tanit-Zerga; "for once, he may sleep here."

So it was that this little beast incurred a large share of responsibility in the events which followed.

Left alone, I became lost in my reflections. The night was black. The whole mountain was shrouded in silence.

It took the louder and louder growls of the leopard to rouse me from my meditation.

King Hiram was braced against the door, digging at it with his drawn claws. He, who had refused to follow Tanit-Zerga a while ago, now wanted to go out. He was determined to go out.

"Be still," I said to him. "Enough of that. Lie down!"

I tried to pull him away from the door. I succeeded only in getting a staggering blow from his paw. Then I sat down on the divan.

My quiet was short.

"Be honest with yourself," I said. "Since Morhange abandoned you, since the day when you saw Antinea, you have had only one idea. What good is it to beguile yourself with the stories of Tanit-Zerga, charming as they are? This leopard is a pretext, perhaps a guide. Oh, you know that mysterious things are going to happen tonight. How have you been able to keep quiet as long as this?"

Immediately I made a resolution.

"If I open the door," I thought, "King Hiram will leap down the corridor and I shall have great difficulty in following him. I must find some other way."

The shade of the window was worked by means of a small cord. I pulled it down. Then I tied it into a firm leash, which I fastened to the metal collar of the leopard.

I half-opened the door.

"There, now you can go. But quietly, quietly."

I had all the trouble in the world to curb the ardor of King Hiram as he dragged me along the shadowy labyrinth of corridors. It was shortly before nine o'clock and the rose-colored night-lights were almost burned out in their niches. Now and then we passed one which was casting its last flickers. What a labyrinth! I realized that from here on I would not recognize the way to her room. I could only follow the leopard.

At first furious, he gradually became used to towing me. He strained ahead, belly to the ground, with sniffs of joy.

NOTHING is more like one black corridor than another black corridor. Doubt seized me. Suppose I should suddenly find myself in the baccarat room? But that was unjust to King Hiram. Barred too long from the dear presence, the good beast was taking me exactly where I wanted him to take me.

Suddenly, at a turn, the darkness ahead lifted. A rose window, faintly glimmering red and green, appeared before us.

The leopard stopped with a low growl before the door in which the rose window was cut.

I recognized it as the door through which the white Targa had led me the day after my arrival, when I had been set upon by King Hiram, when I had found myself in the presence of Antinea.

"We are much better friends today," I said, hoping that he would not give a dangerously loud growl.

I tried to open the door. The light, coming through the window, fell upon the floor, green and red. There was a simple latch, which I turned. I shortened the leash to have better control of King Hiram, who was getting nervous.

The great room where I had seen Antinea for the first time was completely dark, but the garden, on which it gave, shone under a clouded moon in a sky weighted down with the storm which did not break. There was not a breath of air. The lake gleamed like a sheet of pewter.

I seated myself on a cushion, holding the leopard firmly between my knees. He was purring with impatience. I was thinking, not about my goal—for a long time that had been fixed—but about the means.

Then I seemed to hear a distant murmur, a faint sound of voices.

King Hiram growled louder and struggled. I gave him a little more leash. He began to rub along the dark walls on the sides whence the voices seemed to come. I followed him, stumbling as quietly as I could among the scattered cushions.

My eyes, become accustomed to the darkness, could see the pyramid of cushions on which Antinea had first appeared to me.

Suddenly I stumbled. The leopard had stopped. I realized that I had stepped on his tail. Brave beast, he did not make a sound.

Groping along the wall, I felt a second door. Quietly, very quietly, I opened it as I had opened the preceding one. The leopard whimpered feebly.

"King Hiram," I murmured, "be quiet."

I put my arms about his powerful neck. I felt his warm wet tongue on my hands. His flanks quivered. He shook with happiness.

In front of us, lighted in the center, another room opened. In the middle six men were squatting on the matting, playing dice and drinking coffee from tiny copper coffee-cups with long stems. They were the white Tuareg.

A lamp, hung from the ceiling, threw a circle of light over them. Everything outside that circle was in deep shadow. The black faces, the copper cups, the white robes, the moving light and shadow, made a strange etching.

They played with a reserved dignity, announcing the throws in raucous voices.

Then, slowly, very slowly, I slipped the leash from the collar of the impatient little beast.

"Go, boy!"

He leaped with a sharp yelp, and what I had foreseen happened.

The first bound of King Hiram carried him into the midst of the white Tuareg, sowing confusion in the body-guard. Another leap carried him into the shadow again. I made out vaguely the shaded opening of another corridor on the side of the room opposite where I was standing.

"There!" I thought.

The confusion in the room was indescribable, but noiseless. One realized the restraint which nearness to a great presence imposed upon the exasperated guards. The stakes and the dice-boxes had rolled in one direction, the copper cups in another. Two of the Tuareg, doubled up with pain, were rubbing their ribs.

I need not say that I profited by this silent confusion to glide into the room. I was now flattened against the wall of the second corridor, down which King Hiram had just disappeared.

At that moment a clear gong echoed in the silence. The trembling which seized the Tuareg assured me that I had chosen the right way.

One of the six men got up. He passed me in the darkness and I fell in behind him. I was perfectly calm. My least movement was perfectly calculated.

"All that I risk here now," I said to myself, "is being led back politely to my room."

The Targa lifted a curtain. I followed on his heels into the chamber of Antinea.

THE room was huge and at the same time well lighted and very dark. While the right half, where Antinea was, gleamed under shaded lamps, the left was dim.

Those who have penetrated into a Mussulman home know what a *guignol* is, a kind of square niche in the wall, four feet from the floor, its opening covered by a curtain. One mounts to it by wooden steps. I noticed such a *guignol* at my left. I crept into it. My pulse was beating furiously, but I was calm, quite calm. There I could see and hear everything.

I was in Antinea's chamber. There was nothing singular about the room except the great luxury of the hangings. The ceiling was in shadow, but multi-colored lanterns cast a vague and gentle light over gleaming stuffs and furs.

Antinea was stretched out on a lion's skin, smoking. A little silver tray and pitcher lay beside her. King Hiram was flattened out at her feet, licking them madly.

The Targa slave stood rigid before her, one hand on his heart, the other on his forehead, saluting.

Antinea spoke in a hard voice without looking at the man.

"Why did you let the leopard pass? I told you that I wanted to be alone."

"He knocked us over, mistress," said the Targa humbly.

"The doors were not closed, then?"

The slave did not answer.

"Shall I take him away?" he asked.

His eyes, fastened upon King Hiram, who stared at him maliciously, expressed well enough his desire for a negative reply.

"Let him stay since he is here," said Antinea.

She tapped nervously on the little silver tray.

"What is the captain doing?" she asked.

"He dined a while ago and seemed to enjoy his food," the Targa answered.

"Has he said nothing?"

"Yes, he asked to see his companion, the other officer."

Antinea tapped the little tray still more rapidly.

"Did he say nothing else?"

"No, mistress," said the man.

A pallor overspread the Atlantide's little forehead.

"Go get him," she said bruskly.

Bowing the Targa left the room.

I listened to this dialogue with great anxiety. Was this Morhange? Had he been faithful to me after all? Had I suspected him unjustly? He had wanted to see me and been unable to.

My eyes never left Antinea's.

She was no longer the haughty, mocking princess of our first interview. She no longer wore the golden circlet on her forehead—not a bracelet, not a ring. She was dressed only in a full-flowing tunic. Her black hair, unbound, lay in masses of ebony over her slight shoulders and her bare arms.

Her beautiful eyes were deep-circled. Her divine mouth drooped. I did not know whether I was glad or sorry to see this new, quivering Cleopatra.

Flattened at her feet, King Hiram gazed submissively at her.

An immense orichalc mirror was set into the wall at her right. She raised herself erect before it.

The six incense-burners scattered about the room sent up invisible columns of perfume. The balsam spices of Arabia were floating webs in which my shameless senses were entangled. And, her back toward me, standing straight as a lily, Antinea smiled into her mirror.

SLOW steps sounded in the corridor. Antinea immediately fell back into the nonchalant pose in which I had first seen her. One had to see such a transformation to believe it possible.

Morhange entered the room, preceded by a white Targa.

He, too, seemed rather pale, but I was most struck by the expression of serene peace on that face which I thought I knew so well. I felt that I had never understood what manner of man Morhange was—never.

He stood erect before Antinea without seeming to notice her gesture inviting him to be seated.

She smiled at him.

"You are surprized, perhaps," she said finally, "that I should send for you at so late an hour."

Morhange did not move an eyelash.

"Have you considered it well?" she demanded.

Morhange smiled gravely—but did not reply.

I could read in Antinea's face the effort it cost her to continue her smiling; I admired the self-control of these two beings.

"I sent for you," she continued. "You do not guess why? Well, it is to tell you something that you do not expect. It will be no surprize to you if I say that I never met a man like you. During your captivity you have expressed only one wish. Do you recall it?"

"I asked your premission to see my friend before I died," said Morhange simply.

I do not know which stirred me more on hearing these words—delight at Morhange's formal tone in speaking to Antinea, or emotion at hearing the one wish he had expressed.

But Antinea continued calmly:

"That is why I sent for you—to tell you that you are going to see him again. And I am going to do something else. You will perhaps scorn me even more when you realize that you had only to oppose me to bend me to your will—I, who have bent all other wills to mine. But, however that may be, it is decided: I give you both your liberty. Tomorrow Cegheir-ben-Cheikh will lead you past the fifth enclosure. Are you satisfied?"

"I am," said Morhange with a mocking smile. "That will give me a chance," he continued, "to make better plans for the next trip I intend to make this way, for you need not doubt that I shall feel bound to return to express my gratitude. Only next time, to render so great a queen the honors due her, I shall ask my government to furnish me with two or three hundred European soldiers and several cannon."

Antinea was standing up, very pale.

"What are you saying?"

"I am saying," said Morhange coldly, "that I foresaw this. First threats, then promises."

Antinea stepped toward him. He had folded his arms. He looked at her with a sort of grave pity.

"I will make you die in the most atrocious agonies," she said finally.

"I am your prisoner," Morhange replied.

"You shall suffer things that you can not even imagine."

"I am your prisoner," repeated Morhange in the same sad calm.

Antinea paced the room like a beast in a cage. She advanced toward my companion and, no longer mistress of herself, struck him in the face.

He smiled and caught hold of her, drawing her little wrists together with a strange mixture of force and gentleness.

King Hiram growled. I thought he was about to leap, but the cold eyes of Morhange held him fascinated.

"I will have your comrade killed before your eyes," gasped Antinea.

It seemed to me that Morhange paled, but only for a second. I was overcome by the nobility and insight of his reply.

"My companion is brave. He does not fear death. And in any case he would prefer death to life purchased at the price you name."

So saying, he let go Antinea's wrists. Her pallor was terrible. From the expression of her mouth I felt that this would be her last word to him.

"Listen," she said.

How beautiful she was in her scorned majesty, her beauty powerless for the first time.

"Listen," she continued. "Listen for the last time. Remember that I hold the gates of this palace, that I have supreme power over your life. Remember that you breathe only at my pleasure. Remember——"

"I have remembered all that," said Morhange.

"A last time," she repeated.

The serenity of Morhange's face was so powerful that I scarcely noticed his opponent. In that transfigured countenance no trace of worldliness remained.

"A last time," came Antinea's voice, almost breaking.

Morhange was not even looking at her.

"As you will," she said.

Her gong resounded. She had struck the silver disk. The white Targa appeared.

"Leave the room!"

Morhange, his head held high, went out.

NOW Antinea is in my arms. This is no haughty, voluptuous woman whom I am pressing to my heart. It is only an unhappy, scorned little girl.

So great was her trouble that she showed no surprize when I stepped out beside her. Her head is on my shoulder.

Like the crescent moon in the black clouds, I see her clear little bird-like profile amid her mass of hair. Her warm arms hold me convulsively. *O tremblant cœur humain!*

Who could resist such an embrace, amid the soft perfumes, in the languorous night? I feel myself a being without will. Is this my voice, the voice which is murmuring:

"Ask me what you will and I will do it. I will do it."

My senses are sharpened, tenfold keen. My head rests against a soft, nervous little knee. Clouds of odors whirl about me.

Suddenly it seems as if the golden lanterns are waving from the ceiling like giant censers. Is this my voice, the voice repeating in a dream:

"Ask me what you will and I will do it. I will do it."

Antinea's face is almost touching mine. A strange light flickers in her great eyes.

Beyond, I see the gleaming eyes of King Hiram. Beside him there is a little table of Kairouan, blue and gold. On that table I see the gong with which Antinea summons the slaves.

I see the hammer with which she struck it just now, a hammer with a long ebony handle, a heavy silver head—the hammer with which little Lieutenant Kaine dealt death.

I see nothing more.

## CHAPTER XVII

### THE MAIDENS OF THE ROCKS

I AWAKENED in my room. The sun, already at its zenith, filled the place with unbearable light and heat.

The first thing I saw on opening my eyes was the shade, ripped down, lying in the middle of the floor. Then confusedly the night's events began to come back to me.

My head felt stupid and heavy. My mind wandered. My memory seemed blocked. I went out with the leopard, that is certain. That red mark on my forefinger shows how he strained at the leash. My knees are still dusty. I remember creeping along the wall in the room where the white Tuareg were playing at dice. That was the minute after King Hiram had leaped past them. After that—oh, Morhange and Antinea. . . . And then?

I recalled nothing more, but something must have happened, something which I could not remember.

I was uneasy. I wanted to go back, yet it seemed as if I were afraid to go. I have never felt anything more painful than those conflicting emotions.

"It is a long way from here to Antinea's apartment. I must have been very sound asleep not to have noticed when they brought me back, for they must have brought me back."

I stopped trying to think it out. My head ached too much.

"I must have air," I murmured. "I am roasting here; it will drive me mad."

I felt I had to see some one, no matter whom. Mechanically I walked toward the library.

I found M. Le Mesge in a transport of delirious joy. The professor was engaged in opening an enormous bale, carefully sewed in a brown blanket.

"You come at a good time, sir!" he cried on seeing me enter. "The magazines have just arrived."

He dashed about in feverish haste. Presently a stream of pamphlets and magazines—blue, green, yellow and salmon—was bursting from an opening in the bale.

"Splendid, splendid!" he cried, dancing with joy. "Not too late, either; here are the numbers for October fifteenth. We must give a vote of thanks to good Ameur."

His good spirits were contagious.

"There is a good Turkish merchant who subscribes to all the interesting magazines of the two continents. He sends them on by Rhadames to a destination which he little suspects. Ah, here are the French ones."

M. Le Mesge ran feverishly over the tables of contents.

"Internal politics—articles by Francis Charmes, and Anatole Leroy-Beaulieu—d'Haussonville on the Czar's trip to Paris. Look, a study by Avenel of wages in the Middle Ages. And verse, verses of the young poets, Fernand Gregh, Edmond Haraucourt. Ah, the résumé of a book by Henry de Castries on Islam. That may be interesting. Take what you please."

Joy makes people amiable and M. Le Mesge was really delirious with it.

A puff of breeze came from the window. I went to the balustrade and, resting my elbows on it, began to run through a number of the *Revue des Deux Mondes*.

I did not read, but flipped over the pages, my eyes now on the lines of swarming little black characters, now on the rocky basin which lay shivering, pale pink, under the declining sun.

SUDDENLY my attention became fixed. There was a strange coincidence between the text and the landscape.

> In the sky overhead were only light shreds of cloud, like bits of white ash floating up from burnt-out logs. The sun fell over a circle of rocky peaks, silhouetting their severe lines against the azure sky. From on high, a great sadness and gentleness poured down into the lonely enclosure, like a magic drink into a deep cup.*

I turned the pages feverishly. My mind seemed to be clearing.

Behind me, M. Le Mesge, deep in an article, voiced his opinions in indignant growls.

I continued reading:

> On all sides a magnificent view spread out before us in the raw light. The chain of rocks, clearly visible in their barren desolation, which stretched to the very summit, lay stretched out like some great heap of gigantic, unformed things left by some primordial race of Titans to stupefy human beings. Overturned towers. . . .

"It is shameful, downright shameful," the professor was repeating.

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* Gabrielle d'Annunzio: *Les Vierges aux Rochers.* Cf. The *Revue des Deux Mondes* of October 15, 1896; page 867.

> Overturned towers, crumbling citadels, cupolas fallen in, broken pillars, mutilated colossi, prows of vessels, thighs of monsters, bones of titans—this mass, impassible with its ridges and gullies, seemed the embodiment of everything huge and tragic. So clear were the distances. . .

"Downright shameful," M. Le Mesge kept on saying in exasperation, thumping his fist on the table.

> So clear were the distances that I could see, as if I had it under my eyes, infinitely enlarged, every contour of the rock which Violante had shown me through the window, with the gesture of a creator.

Trembling, I closed the magazine. At my feet I saw the rock, now red, which Antinea had pointed out to me the day of our first interview, huge, steep, overhanging the reddish-brown garden.

"That is my horizon," she had said.

M. Le Mesge's excitement had passed all bounds.

"It is worse than shameful; it is infamous."

I almost wanted to strangle him into silence. He seized my arm.

"Read that, sir, and, although you don't know a great deal about the subject, you will see that this article on Roman Africa is a miracle of misinformation, a monument of ignorance. And it is signed— Do you know by whom it is signed?"

"Leave me alone," I said brutally.

"Well, it is signed by Gaston Boissier. Yes, sir! Gaston Boissier, grand officer of the Legion of Honor, lecturer at the *École Normale Supérieure*, permanent secretary of the Fremch Academy, member of the Academy of Inscriptions and Literature, one of those who once ruled out the subject of my thesis—one of those—ah, poor University, ah, poor France!"

I was no longer listening. I had begun to read again. My forehead was covered with perspiration, but it seemed as if my head had been cleared like a room when a window is opened; memories were beginning to come back like doves winging their way home to the devecote.

> At that moment an irrepressible tremor shook her whole body; her eyes dilated as if some terrible sight had filled them with horror.
>
> "Antonello," she murmured, and for seconds she was unable to say another word.
>
> I looked at her in mute anguish, and the suffering which drew her dear lips together seemed also to clutch at my heart. The vision which was in her eyes passed into mine, and I saw again the thin white face of Antonello and the quick quivering of his eyelids, the waves of agony which seized his long worn body and shook it like a reed.

I threw the magazine upon the table.

"That is it," I said.

To cut the pages I had used the knife with which M. Le Mesge had cut the cords of the bale, a short ebony-handled dagger, one of these daggers that the Tuareg wear in a bracelet-sheath against the upper left arm.

I slipped it into the big pocket of my flannel dolman and walked toward the door.

I was about to cross the threshold when I heard M. Le Mesge call me.

"M. de Saint-Avit! M. de Saint-Avit! I want to ask you something, please."

"What is it?"

"Nothing important. You know that I have to mark the labels for the red marble hall."

I walked toward the table.

"Well, I forgot to ask M. Morhange at the beginning, the date and place of his birth. After that I had no chance. I did not see him again. So I am forced to turn to you. Perhaps you can tell me."

"I can," I said very calmly.

He took a large white card from a box which contained several, and dipped his pen.

"Number 54. Captain?"

"Captain Jean Marie François Morhange."

While I dictated, one hand resting on the table, I noticed a stain on my cuff, a little stain, reddish-brown.

"Morhange," repeated M. Le Mesge, finishing the lettering of my friend's name. "Born at?"

"Villefranche."

"Villefranche, Rhône. What date?"

"The fourteenth of October, 1859."

"The fourteenth of October, 1859. Good. Died at Ahaggar the fifth of January, 1897. There, that is done. A thousand thanks, sir, for your kindness."

"You are welcome."

I left M. Le Mesge.

MY MIND thenceforth was well made up, and as I said I was perfectly calm. Nevertheless when I had taken leave of M. Le Mesge I felt the need of waiting a few minutes before executing my decision.

First I wandered through the corridors; then, finding myself near my room, I went to it. It was still intolerably hot. I sat down on my divan and began to think.

The dagger in my pocket bothered me. I took it out and laid it on the floor.

It was a good dagger with a diamond-shaped blade and with a collar of orange leather between the blade and the handle. The sight of it recalled the silver hammer. I remembered how easily it fitted into my hand when I struck.

Every detail of the scene came back to me with incomparable vividness, but I did not even shiver. It seemed as if my determination to kill the instigator of the murder permitted me peacefully to evoke its brutal details.

If I reflected over my deed, it was to be surprized at it, not to condemn myself.

"Well," I said to myself, "I have killed this Morhange, who was once a baby, who, like all the others, cost his mother so much trouble with his baby-sicknesses. I have put an end to his life. I have reduced to nothingness the monument of love, of tears, of trials overcome and pitfalls escaped, which constitutes a human existence. What an extraordinary adventure!"

That was all. No fear, no remorse, none of that Shakespearean horror after the murder which today, skeptic though I am and blasé and utterly, utterly disillusioned, sets me shuddering whenever I am alone in a dark room.

"Come," I thought. "It's time—time to finish it up."

I picked up the dagger. Before putting it in my pocket I went through the motion of striking. All was well. The dagger fitted into my hand.

I had been through Antinea's apartment only when guided, the first time by the white Targa, the second time by the leopard, yet I found the way again without trouble. Just before coming to the door with the rose window I met a Targa.

"Let me pass," I ordered. "Your mistress has sent for me."

The man obeyed, stepping back.

Soon a dim melody came to my ears. I recognized the sound of a *rebaza*, the violin with a single string, played by the Tuareg women. It was Aguida playing, squatting as usual at the feet of her mistress. The three other women were also squatted about her. Tanit-Zerga was not there.

Since that was the last time I saw her, let me tell you of Antinea, of how she looked in that supreme moment.

Did she feel the danger hovering over her and did she wish to brave it by her surest artifices? I had in mind the slender, unadorned body without rings, without jewels, which I had pressed to my heart the night before, and now I started in surprize at seeing before me, adorned like an idol, not a woman but a queen.

The heavy splendor of the Pharaohs weighted down her slender body. On her head was the great gold *pschent* of Egyptian gods and kings; emeralds, the national stone of the Tuareg, were set in it, tracing and retracing her name in Tifinar characters. A red satin *schenti*, embroidered in golden lotus, enveloped her like the casket of a jewel. At her feet lay an ebony scepter, headed with a trident. Her bare arms were encircled by two serpents, whose fangs touched her armpits as if to bury themselves there. From the ear-pieces of the *pschent* streamed a necklace of emeralds; its first strand passed under her determined chin; the others lay in circles against her bare throat.

She smiled as I entered.

"I was expecting you," she said simply.

I advanced till I was four steps from the throne, then stopped before her.

She looked at me ironically.

"What is that?" she asked with perfect calm.

I followed her gesture. The handle of the dagger protruded from my pocket.

I drew it out and held it firmly in my hand, ready to strike.

"The first of you who moves will be sent naked six leagues into the red desert and left there to die," said Antinea coldly to her women, whom my gesture had thrown into a frightened murmuring.

She turned to me.

"That dagger is very ugly and you hold it badly. Shall I sent Sydya to my room to get the silver hammer? You are more adroit with it than with the dagger."

"Antinea," I said in a low voice, "I am going to kill you."

"Do not speak so formally. You were more affectionate last night. Are you embarrassed by them?" she said, pointing to the women, whose eyes were wide with terror.

"Kill me?" she went on. "You are hardly reasonable. Kill me at the moment when you can reap the fruits of the murder of——"

"Did—did he suffer?" I asked suddenly, trembling.

"Very little. I told you that you used the hammer as if you had done nothing else all you life."

"Like little Kaine," I murmured.

She smiled in surprize.

"Oh, you know that story. Yes, like little Kaine. But at least Kaine was sensible. You——I do not understand."

"I do not understand myself, very well."

She looked at me with amused curiosity.

"I did what you told me to. May I in turn ask one favor, ask you one question?"

"What is it?"

"It was dark, was it not, in the room where he was?"

"Very dark. I had to lead you to the bed where he lay asleep."

"He was asleep, you are sure?"

"I said so."

"He—did not die instantly, did he?"

"No. I know exactly when he died—two minutes after you struck him and fled with a shriek."

"Then surely he could not have known?"

"Known what?"

"That it was I who—who held the hammer."

"He might not have known it, indeed," said Antinea. "But he did know."

"What!"

"He did know—because I told him," she said, staring straight into my eyes with magnificent audacity.

"And," I murmured, "he—he believed it?"

"With the help of my explanation he recognized your shriek. If he had not realized that you were his murderer, the affair would not have interested me," she finished with a scornful little smile.

Four steps, I said, separated me from Antinea. I sprang forward, but before I reached her I was struck to the floor.

King Hiram had leaped at my throat.

At the same moment I heard the calm, haughty voice of Antinea.

"Call the men," she commanded.

A second later I was released from the leopard's clutch. The six white Tuareg had surrounded me and were trying to bind me.

I am fairly strong and quick. I was on my feet in a second. One of my enemies lay on the floor ten feet away, felled by a well-placed blow on the jaw. Another was gasping under my knee. That was the last time I saw Antinea. She stood erect, both hands resting on her ebony scepter, watching the struggle with a smile of contemptuous interest.

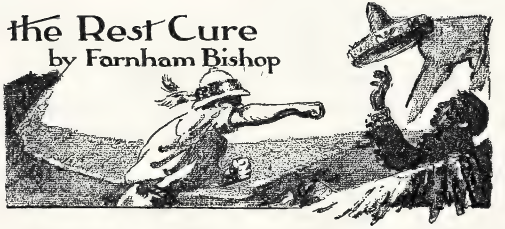
Suddenly I gave a loud cry and loosed the hold I had on my victim. I felt a cracking in my left arm; one of the Tuareg had seized it and twisted it until my shoulder was dislocated.

When I completely lost consciousness I was being carried down the corridor by two white phantoms, so bound that I could not move a muscle.

TO BE CONCLUDED

# the Rest Cure

## by Farnham Bishop



*Author of Ten Thousand Hectáreas," "The Devil in Chains," etc.*

"THANK Heaven, it was only a nightmare!" exclaimed Garmey as he sat up in the hammock and gazed about him with the relieved yet startled eyes of one new-roused from a vivid, repulsive dream.

He saw the patio of his house in the highlands of Mayacan. Two-thirds of the beautiful little garden-courtyard lay in cool shade; only the inner face of the eastern wall glowed with the light of the late afternoon sun. A lithe green lizard clung to the rough, harmoniously faded orange plaster, drawing life from the heat on his mailed back as well as from the occasional insect that came within roping-distance of his lariat-like tongue. Jewel-throated humming-birds, their wings an almost iridescent blur as they hovered to drink the honey from a flower or flashed from shrub to tree, from tree to hanging vine; the tiny fawn nibbling the velvet turf; Tonto the monkey huddled, a fuzzy gray ball, in a crotch of his favorite tree; the ceaseless, drowsy patter of falling spray from the mossy old Spanish fountain—all were as they should be.

Gone was the horrible illusion of half-frozen fingers wrenching at the jammed and useless mechanism of their only gun as the ice-crusted little patrol-boat swung and swerved to dodge the stream of machine-gun bullets splashing alongside nearer and ever nearer from the nose-diving Hun seaplane. The North Sea and all its horrors were two years and three thousand miles away.

Lighting a cigaret, the young Englishman resettled himself comfortably in the hammock and opened the second volume of "Clarissa Harlowe."

*Ratat-tat-tat-tat-tat!*

The cigaret fell from Garmey's mouth, the book from his hands. There was no mistaking the beastly sound; it was a burst of machine-gun fire. Subconsciously he realized that this was not the first time he had heard that gun this afternoon; there must have been an earlier discharge a few seconds previously—hence his dream.

Again the machine-gun screamed and whirred. Another answered it; rifles began to crack faster and faster till their reports merged into a continuous roar. Yells and the shrieks of frightened women came from the direction of the village. Then the call of a high-pitched bugle rang from the hills behind the house. There was a cheap theatrical sound to it all that grated on Garmey's war-weary nerves.

"Blast it," he said disgustedly. "Has some silly ass started another war?"

He clapped his hands three times. There was a momentary pause in the firing and the sound of the summons echoed through the patio and the rooms and corridors beyond. But no white-coated servant appeared; not even the hitherto unfailing On Low, the Chinese major-domo.

As for the native maids and *muchachos*, Garmey realized that if any of them had been in the house, they would have been running and screaming all over the place by this time, like their relatives in the village. The hacienda was still.

As the bugling and firing began again, a reassuring thought came to Garmey's mind.

"They're making a cinema film!" he told himself. "Some Yankee movie company must have come down here from the States, and the servants have gone to see the fun."

Then, even as he was thinking this and reaching down to pick up the book again, something zoomed past overhead—something that Garmey had heard too often to mistake it for anything else: the whir of a passing bullet. And after it came others.

"Confound it!" growled the Englishman. "I shall have to look into this."

Getting out of the hammock, he started across the patio in the direction of the stairs leading to the flat, parapetted roof of his spacious but one-story dwelling. Before he reached it, however, there came the tramp and jingle of many horsemen charging down the road from the hills and pulling up outside the closed door of the hacienda, which soon resounded with heavy blows from the butts of half a dozen carbines.

"Here! Here! I say, stop that or you'll break something!" called Garmey as he hastened toward the gateway.

At the sound of his voice the hammering ceased. Ignoring the strongly shuttered and grated little opening that the eighteenth-century Spanish architect had provided for just such an emergency, Garmey unbolted and threw open the massive door.

He found the road in front of his house crowded with cavalrymen in the shoddy blue uniform of the Federal army of Mayacan. Towering above the other officers and men who had dismounted with him at the door of the hacienda was the biggest, ugliest native that Garmey had ever seen: a swarthy, swaggering brute of obviously mixed blood and evil disposition. His breath reeked of pulque and his body of many bathless days and nights. But the sombrero shoved on the back of his head was heavy with tarnished silver lace and embroidered with the national eagle that denoted the rank of general.

Garmey was as innocent of the meaning of this insignia as he was of what the fellow was saying to him. But any one could see that the giant was in command of the rest and was demanding admission for himself and his followers. His tone was altogether too insolent, and the few Spanish words that Garmey recognized were not pretty.

"It's no use your banging about like this, you know," said the Englishman reprovingly. "I must ask you to go away at once. I am a British subject and if you set foot on my property or molest any of my servants I shall bring the matter to the attention of our ambassador at the capital."

As it happened, none of the group before him realized that the unfamiliar word "British" signified "*Inglêz*," though they recognized his speech as English and most of them caught its general meaning. By his language, his complexion and his blue eyes they naturally mistook his nationality and comported themselves accordingly.

"*Americano!*" sneered one. The rest broke into a derisive laugh that rose to a howl of delight as the general deliberately spat in the Englishman's face.

THE reaction was instinctive and instantaneous. Garmey's fist hit the other's unshaven chin so hard that the big half-breed's sombrero flew off, his spurred heels rose high in the air and the back of his head struck the stony road with an impact that would have fractured a white man's skull. At the sight of their general lying there limp and senseless the four nearest troopers threw themselves on Garmey and dragged him down till his neck lay across his own threshold. Another soldier drew his saber and was about to drive its point through the helpless man's throat when an officer struck the blade aside.

"Idiot!" he cried. "Would you kill him like that—quickly and with little pain—after what he has done? Take this gringo within and shut him up where he will be safe, until our brave general has recovered and is ready to command a more terrible and fitting punishment!"

Obediently and with much unnecessary roughness the troopers jerked Garmey to his feet and prodded him back through the patio and up and down the corridors until they found a room to their liking. There in the smallest, dustiest unused bedroom in the house they left him, flat on the rough stone floor and bound hand and foot with rawhide thongs drawn cruelly tight. Then, banging and locking the door behind them, the soldiers went away. Most of the squadron had already mounted and ridden on.

Through the iron-barred window high in the outer wall Garmey could see blue sky and the angle of a snow-clad mountain-peak, but nothing more. For the next half-hour, or so he heard the sound of intermittent firing from the direction of the village. This came to an end as the sunlit snow on the mountain turned from white to rose and from rose to gray, and the stars began to appear.

The soldiers came trooping back into the hacienda and swarmed all over it, smashing and looting. The sentry who had been posted outside the door ever since it was closed grew tired of shouting for some one to come and relieve him, and quit his post to join the fun that was growing faster and more furious with the opening of each case.

"Rotten lot—no discipline!" commented the prisoner. "Now if I can only manage to wriggle out of these lashings or chafe them through against something I'll have a try at those rusty old bars."

Hour after hour, while the drunken orgy continued all about him, Garmey struggled to work himself free of his bonds, till his wrists and ankles were red and dripping. But the rawhide was too tough and too well tied. Toward morning he grew so exhausted that, in spite of pain and thirst and the undiminished racket still going on in the patio and the *sala*, he fell into a doze.

Again he dreamed that the Hun seaplane was swooping down upon him; again he woke with the sound of a machine-gun ringing in his ears. And this time there was no deceptive interlude of silence.

"Counter attack, by Jove!" cried the delighted Garmey. "Here come the other side, whoever they are, and coming strong! They're mopping up the village! They're closing in on my place! They'll have a nasty job rushing this house without shelling it first, though. My guests seem to have grasped the situation—they've called off their merry sing-song and are manning that silly clay parapet topsides!"

He listened critically to the furious magazine-fire now rattling overhead.

"Panic-firing!" he grunted contemptuously. "Blazing away wild and blind! Most of them squiffed and all with their wind up—they won't do much hitting in this misty sort of twilight! Wish I was out there with a landing-party and a howitzer!"

Some one outside was evidently sweeping the steel-jacketed stream from his machine-gun up and down the top of the parapet on that side of the house, by the way the defenders' fire slackened and died away.

"Come on, you chaps!" exhorted Garmey. "Now's the time to rush up close under the wall and——"

*Crash!* came a resounding explosion from the patio, followed by loud terrified howls and the patter of falling objects.

"Bomb!" finished Garmey. "That's the ticket! Lob 'em over—clear the decks! Mind my window, please! Oh, well done! Now, what's the stuff they're using? Doesn't sound like picric or guncotton—smells like— Oh, of course, dynamite!"

A tremendous boom, deeper and ten times louder than any that had gone before, made the whole building quiver and shook the centuries-old plaster even from the walls of this secluded room.

"Blown in the door!" gasped Garmey, coughing in the dust-filled air. "Must have squandered a boxful that time! Oh, well played, our side! *Strafe* the brutes!"

A large and enthusiastic storming-party was evidently coming in through the breach without waiting for the smoke to lift or the last of the wreckage to drop. Steel clashed and revolvers popped for a minute or two—then came loud wails for mercy and louder cheers of triumph.

Footsteps pounded down the corridor leading to the room where Garmey lay imprisoned. Some one turned the key in the lock and threw open the door. In bounded a yellow-faced fiend wearing a soiled white blouse and brandishing a long knife.

"Hallow, On Low!" said Garmey, smiling up at his major-domo. "I've been worrying about you. So you got away and organized a rescue-party, eh? Good man!"

Wiping the knife-blade on his blouse, the Chinese cut his master's bonds.

"Me catchem Valonistas—fetchem onetime!" he explained cryptically. "Now go catchem two-piecee bleakfast."

"Take a drink of this," urged a tall, lean white man who had followed On Low into the room and remained there after the major-domo had padded away in the direction of the kitchen. "About the last of your private stock, I'm afraid. Drink hearty!"

"Cheerio!" answered Garmey. "I needed that."

He looked at the other's bleached khaki and sleeveless brown sweater.

"Has America declared war on Mayacan?" he asked.

"No, Mayacan's at war with herself—natural result of trying to hold a presidential election. Some of us Yanks down here have mixed in because we're tired of being treated the way you were last night. My name's Thornton, by the way."

"Mine's Garmey—Alfred Garmey, and I'm deucedly glad to meet you, Mr. Thornton. So this is how they hold a general election, eh? I suppose you're campaigning for the opposition?"

"Yes, for old General Varona, the head of the Liberal Party. He didn't start fighting till the other side began to shoot or jail everybody that tried to vote the Liberal ticket. He's a decent old scout and he's pledged himself to restore peace and prosperity by giving the peons a square deal and at the same time protect the decent element among the foreigners. Our army ought to occupy the capital in another month."

"If you'll be good enough to pass me through your lines," said Garmey, "I think I'll run up there myself and lay a complaint before the British ambassador."

"You'd have a swell time doing it!" replied Thornton with a grin. "Don't you know that President Estranza gave your ambassador his passports and broke off diplomatic relations six months ago?"

"Really? No, I hadn't heard—I've been a bit of a recluse for the last year or so. I must have you tell me the news while we have breakfast together. My boy will fetch it directly. And now, if you don't mind, I think I'll go and wash up. I hope those ruffians haven't wrecked the bath."

"It's the one place in the house that wouldn't interest them," Thornton assured him.

THEY ate in the room that had been Garmey's prison, for the rest of the hacienda was a place of squalid horror after last night's orgy and the morning's bombing. The beautiful patio had suffered worst of all, according to Thornton. His host refused to set eyes on the ruin.

"I don't want to see it—I mean to close my eyes and have On Low guide me out the back way. Sounds fantastic, perhaps, but I want to remember this place as I have known it since I came here a year ago. I can't tell you what living here in peace has meant to me.

"You see, I had four solid years of the other thing; three months' training from August to November in '14 and then sea-service, North Sea and Channel patrol mostly, in M. L.'s and T. B. D.'s."

"Sounds strenuous, but I don't *sabe* the initials," said the American.

"Motor launches and torpedo-boat destroyers. Fishing for Fritz, nursing neutrals, picking up survivors and all that sort of thing. As I said, I put in four years of it, with my proper whack of shore-leave of course, but the rest was straight sea-duty. Never sick and never had the luck to be wounded. Sounds funny to you, I suppose, my putting it that way——"

"It does not," declared Thornton. "I spent eighteen months in a machine-gun outfit in the A. E. F. and never saw the inside of a hospital either. I know what it is to pray for the right kind of wound and a chance to rest. After four years you must have been all in. Did the big slump hit you after the Armistice?"

"Just that," said Garmey. "Or to be precise, a few months later, when I had been demobed. I wasn't a *pukka* officer but a R. N. V. R.—pardon, Royal Navy Volunteer Reservist. Used to do a bit of yachting in the old days.

"I went to work in my uncle's office in London, but I couldn't stick it. The noise was too much for me—typewriters, motor-horns in the street outside, the least thing put me off my stride. Once, when a chap dropped a tin cash-box on the floor behind me, I nearly tipped my desk over, I jumped so. Fancy that, after making smoke-screens off Zeebrugge!"

"I can fancy it, all right," replied Thornton. "I've seen shell-shock cases before."

"I must have been in very nearly the same sort of shape. Another thing was the cold. We had an uncommonly beastly Winter, even for London, and a coal shortage on top of that. And they won't let you wear duffel suits in the office. I couldn't fall asleep without dreaming I was back off the Scotch coast in December.

"Finally, after I'd become a regular neurasthenic old woman, they called in a doctor and I told him that all I wanted was to lie out in a really hot sun somewhere for a couple of centuries and forget everything else in the world. He laughed and said that I had diagnosed my own case to a hair. It seems that his father was a missionary and had lived in this very house, back in the Dictator's time.

"The upshot was that I came out here and took the place. It was no trouble at all, for I simply left everything to On Low. My patrol-boat's crew had picked him up from a torpedoed Norwegian bark—he was the cook and the only survivor. For a while it looked as if he wouldn't be even that—he'd been so badly banged up and chilled. We carried no medical officer, so of course I looked after him myself. Since then, he's simply annexed me.

"He must have lived in this country some time before in his long and sinful life, for he can speak Mayacan Spanish a precious sight faster and better than he can English. First thing I knew he'd married him a wife and organized her family into a serving-staff. He runs the place to perfection and does it on practically nothing. How he manages to do me so well on so little is a mystery I've never been able to solve."

"Here's the solution," said Thornton as he drained his third cup of coffee and reached for a cigaret. "I've been talking with some of your *Man Friday's compadres*. On Low has been running the general store and every gambling lay-out in the village. If you two stay here another year he'll own the entire valley.

"He and the rest of the servants sneaked out while you were having your usual nap yesterday afternoon to attend the biggest cock-fight ever pulled off in these parts. Every peso for nine miles round was on one or the other of those two birds and everybody was so busy watching those blamed roosters that they never saw the Federals until they were closing in on them."

"But why should the Federal troops attack a peaceful village like this?" demanded the Englishman.

"Because this end of the State declared for the revolution about six weeks ago. I can't see how you've managed to pull a Rip Van Winkle so long."

"I've read nothing later than 'Lorna Doone' and you're the first outsider I've talked with since this time last year. On Low knew I didn't want to be bothered. I've been worrying about him; of course, I knew that he would have nipped back and warned me if those brigands had given him half a chance. Did they do much damage to his shop and Monte Carlo?"

"Looted everything they could pack and smashed up the rest," said Thornton curtly. "Our counterattack on the village finished the job—half a troop of Federals made a stand in On Low's *tienda* and we had to bomb them out of it. Your Chink was so anxious to get away yesterday and bring help from our camp that he didn't stop to save anything, not even his wife. Those brutes got drunk and—she was dead this morning when he found her."

"The swine!" said Garmey in a low, colorless voice, breathing rather heavily through his nostrils. "I must pay them back for that, of course. I wouldn't have had On Low do a thing like that for a million pounds. I—but here he comes now."

The two white men sat silent as the Chinese entered, cleared away the breakfast things and departed, his body once more clothed in speckless white, his face as void of emotion as the freshly wiped surface of the table. He had saved his master; the rest was already forgotten. Adequate speech under the circumstances was not easy to find and the Englishman would have been the last person in the world to find it. But he did some very swift thinking and as soon as On Low had gone put a question to his guest:

"Candidly, Mr. Thornton, do you believe that things will be better in this country if the present lot are turned out and your General Varona put in? Isn't one native leader much the same as any other?"

"Taking them as a bunch, yes. But Varona is different. I've known him personally for nearly ten years and he's the biggest, squarest man ever born in this flea-bitten republic since the days of Benito the Liberator. That's why I'm fighting for him. And President Estranza was half pro-German and three-quarters anti-Ally all through the big war."

"I see," nodded Garmey. Then he added diffidently, "Would your side have any use for my services?"

"Would we?" exclaimed Thornton. "Why, man, we need a trained naval officer more than we do anybody else in the world."

"Indeed? Why is that? But perhaps you'd rather not say."

"Oh, there's no mystery about it—the whole country's wise. Do you know Puerto del Norte?"

"I came in through there."

"That is our base. Roughly speaking, we have the northern half of Mayacan with us and Estranza the south. We have most of the people on our side; he has most of the regular army and, what is more serious, practically the whole navy.

"As soon as Puerto del Norte pronounced

for the revolution the president mobilized the fleet at San Angel, gave it all the coal and back-pay it had been asking for and sent it up the coast to recapture or blockade our base. We had only one fighting-ship on our side: the little old *Rapido*. They call her that because she is the slowest destroyer afloat.

"But her captain, Ramon Valdes, was a pure-blooded Spaniard and the hardest man to scare I ever knew. The first dark night after the Federal fleet showed up he took the *Rapido* out through the harbor mouth and tried to torpedo the flag-ship. Their searchlights spotted him before he could get within range.

"The Federals have two big modern destroyers, the *Jaguar* and the *Tigre*. Both of 'em landed on the poor little old *Rapido* at the same time and clawed her up something scandalous. Their gunnery was rotten and Valdes managed to get most of his ship back home again before he dropped dead on what was left of the bridge.

"The *Rapido* is still afloat in the upper harbor but that's about all you can say for her. She moves and sounds like a flat-wheeled trolley-car and General Varona has taken most of her crew and all of her guns for the army. But if you can do anything with what's left he'll make you an admiral."

"What is the strength of the Federal fleet?" asked Garmey.

"The two destroyers aforesaid, three light-draft, no-account gunboats, a couple of armed tramps and the flag-ship *Hidalgo*. They call her a battleship, but she's only about five thousand tons and dates from the early nineties. Carries a ten-inch gun in a turret at each end and a lot of four- and six-inchers in tin bay-windows all up and down the side."

"I recognize the type," said the naval officer, smiling. "What's to keep the Federals from coming in and taking the town? Is the entrance mined?"

Thornton nodded.

"That was the first thing Valdes did. The entrance is a narrow one, as you know, and the forts on either side have enough modern guns to sink any tugs or launches they might try to use for mine-sweepers. As a matter of fact, the Federals are perfectly satisfied to stay outside and blockade us. We've got to break that blockade."

"So that you can import some more munitions from the States?"

"You said it," admitted Thornton. "Estranza's getting in all he wants through San Angel. They don't make any in this country and if we can't run a cargo or two into Puerto del Norte by six weeks at the latest we're going to be up against it. Now you see why we need a naval expert. Can you figure out any way to beat the combination?"

Garmey smoked thoughtfully for perhaps three minutes. Then he asked:

"What became of the *Rapido's* torpedoes and air-compressor? Are they still aboard, do you think?"

"I guess so," hazarded Thornton. "Nobody'd have any use for them ashore. Yes, you can count on finding them there, with the tubes and everything."

"Then it will be quite simple, I think. Now if you will be kind enough to take me to General Varona I'll see what can be done. There's only one thing that worries me."

"What's that?"

"That I may have another beastly nervous break-down and make a mess of the whole show."

The big American laughed as they rose together from the table. "From what I've seen of your nerves today, I guess they'll stand the strain. Come on, admiral, let's go!"

FIVE weeks later Thornton rode down with a train-load of wounded to Puerto del Norte, where he had a boatman take him out to the *Rapido*. Garmey, in the trimmest of white uniforms, with a big green and gold badge on his cap, welcomed him aboard.

"What's the good word from the southern front?" he asked cheerfully.

"Ammunition!" said Thornton in a low voice. "If we get it, we can smash Estranza P.D.Q.; if we can't, he's going to smash us. That's the whole thing in a peanut-shell. I'm down here to rush up the ship-load that ought to be due about now, if we can only get it ashore. You've been told about it, haven't you?"

"Oh, yes. The American steamer *Westfield*, with a cargo munitions from the States. She's waiting somewhere just over the horizon-line now, I fancy. I had a code wireless from a friend of mine on board a couple of hours ago. You'll like old Mac—he's no end of a sportsman."

"Did he say whereabouts on the coast the *Westfield* would try to land her cargo?" asked Thornton eagerly.

"Why here, of course."

"Here? In Puerto del Norte?"

"Yes; dock her alongside the new quay, where her cargo cranes can discharge directly into your trains. No sense knocking about an unlighted, sandy coast like this on a moonless night, like one of Q.'s Cornish smugglers. Was that your romantic notion, old bean?"

"But what about the blockading fleet?" demanded the astonished Thornton.

"Oh, don't worry about those old crocks out there," replied Garmey indifferently. "Mac and I will look after them. I'm expecting him almost any minute now."

Raising a heavy pair of marine binoculars to his eyes, the Englishman turned to seaward and swept the smooth, gleaming surface of the Gulf of Mayacan. Standing in such an attitude on a well-scrubbed quarter-deck, he was the very pattern of a trained and experienced naval officer who knew himself to be thoroughly competent and was therefore entirely at ease. So Thornton told his own bewildered mind, but he could not entirely still his doubts.

What had Garmey accomplished since he had been given command of the *Rapido* more than a month ago? Nothing, according to the eloquent and suspicious commander of the port, but to make his crew keep themselves and their vessel clean. True, he had discharged his entire stock of torpedoes at random into the harbor, picked them up again and tinkered with their insides until he seemed satisfied with the way they ran. But he had made no attempt to repair the destroyer's battered and limping engines. On this most crucial day he had not even raised steam, as the thin wisp of oil-vapor rising from one of the three funnels betrayed, more than enough to run his dynamo and other auxiliaries.

Uneasily Thornton noted the copy of "Vanity Fair" on the deck-chair beneath the awning and the flutter of On Low's white blouse in the galley door. Had Garmey thought of anything beyond his own selfish comfort: his so-called "living in peace" to rest his war-worn nerves? Was he after all nothing but one of those maddeningly futile remittance men, outwardly polished but inwardly rotten, with which England has strewn the far corners of the earth? Was he nothing but a waster—a dreamer of impossibly fantastic dreams? If that were so, then thousands of brave men were doomed to defeat and death and the long-oppressed millions of Mayacan to unbroken tyranny.

Garmey's voice, as casual and repressed as ever, broke in on the other's thoughts.

"Here comes Mac now," he said, holding out the binoculars. "Take a look."

Training the glasses in the direction of the Englishman's leveled forefinger, Thornton at first saw nothing but blue, sun-lit water. Then across the field of his vision slid something that made the American think of a rotary snow-plow throwing up great spouts of dazzling white as the bucking engines ram it through the deep drifts after a blizzard. But no locomotive ever traveled a snow-clogged track as fast as the tiny gray dot between the two flanking waves of up-flung foam swept over the deep-blue waters of the tropic sea. It came on at the pace of a transcontinental limited.

Before Thornton realized it the on-coming object was out of focus, nor could he manage to pick it up again with the binoculars. But now it was near enough to be seen easily with the naked eye. From either side the out-flung destroyers raced in to cut it off; white puffs of smoke came from their guns and those of the *Hidalgo* and her five lesser consorts lying just out of range of the forts that guarded the harbor mouth.

But the little gray dot was too small a mark and traveling at too great a pace for the ill-trained and startled blockaders to hit or intercept. Leaving the destroyers far behind, it swung in a great curve around one end of the line of gunboats and darted straight for the narrow entrance of Puerto del Norte.

Roused by the sudden firing to seaward and suspecting some mysterious plot of their foes, the gunners of both forts now blazed away at the craft speeding toward them.

Uttering the same short word in chorus, Garmey and Thornton both dashed to the wireless room, where they found the native operator on watch peacefully sleeping on his bunk. Thornton, who was slightly in the lead, dropped into the chair, clapped on the receivers and began to call up the *commandante's* office in the city.

"Mac's through—they never touched him!" Garmey spoke from the doorway. "He's coming up the bay now. Just tell those idiots ashore to let us alone and everything will be all right."

"The *commandante* wants to know why

you didn't tell him beforehand. He's all fussed up about it!"

"Because he's a gossipy old woman!" replied Garmey sweetly. "Just tell him so, please, with my compliments."

Soothing the *commandante* and inventing plausible answers to his interminable questions kept Thornton busy for something like a quarter of an hour. At the end of that time Garmey reappeared, looking like a school-boy on the first morning of vacation.

"Come on, Thornton, we're ready to start and I want you to join us. You've handled a Lewis gun, I suppose?"

"Sure!" said the American, rising with alacrity and following the other to the rail, where he looked with much interest at the strange gray-painted craft lying alongside.

SHE was about forty-five feet long, with a slender, beautifully modeled hull, decked over and sloping smoothly aft from the high prow to the low-sunken stern. There was a small round manhole forward and a somewhat larger navigating-well amidships, the latter protected by a high coaming and the smallest possible covered wheel-house. A stubby mast upheld wireless aerials running down to bow and stern. The green and gold banner of the revolution fluttered jauntily from the ensign-staff.

"What kind of a boat is this?" asked Thornton as he followed Garmey into the wheel-house. "The *commandante* insisted on knowing and I told him that it was a genuine *submarina volante:* a flying submarine."

"Not a bad name," chuckled Garmey. "We used to call 'em 'Scooters.' All right, Mac?"

"Aye!" boomed a deep voice from the unseen regions below the manhole forward.

"Then let's not keep 'em waiting!"

A mighty engine began to throb and the entire fabric of the little craft to vibrate with it as the destroyer's seamen cast off the lines and shoved her clear.

"Scooter is right!" cried Thornton, as they shot out into the harbor. "She sure can scoot! What can this baby make?"

"Forty knots."

"Fifty statute miles an hour! *Quel bateau!* Don't forget the mine-field, admiral! You're heading right into it!"

"We won't hit anything. Our craft's only twenty-six inches—skim right over them!"

The motor-boat was skimming indeed. The faster her engines pulsed, the higher the light, hydroplane-like hull rose in the water, till she seemed ready to soar. The huge bow-wave increased till Thornton could see nothing through the dead-light before him but a welter of foaming spray. Suddenly above the roar of the engine he caught the shrill sound of shouted *vivas;* looking astern, he saw that they were passing through the harbor-mouth to the cheers of the soldiers thronging the parapets on either side.

Dead ahead and five miles off-shore lay the enemy's fleet. At the speed the motor-boat was traveling she would be right among them in about six minutes. Unwilling to distract the skipper's attention at such a time, Thornton stepped back through the open after-end of the wheel-house, grasped the edge of the roof and pulled himself up for a glimpse over the top.

The wind of their passage struck him like a blow in the face, tore his campaign hat from his head and carried it far astern. Winking the tears and spray out of his eyes, Thornton managed to make out that the two destroyers had returned to their usual stations far to seaward of the rest, to watch for possible blockade-runners. Evidently their officers had never imagined that the audacious little gray racer would come out again so soon after it had gone in.

The rest of the fleet lay in a long line, the flag-ship near the center. Anchors were being broken out, smoke was pouring from every funnel and throngs of excited men were running frantically about the decks as the Federal squadron strove to get under way and prepare for action with the mysterious white streak now bearing down upon them at unheard-of speed.

Garmey's objective was plain; he was heading straight for the big *Hidalgo.* But to what purpose? Save the Lewis gun, there was no other weapon, as far as Thornton could see, on board the scooter. He had had a good look at her bows, heaved out of water by the weight of her low-lying stern, even to the keel, and there was no sign of any torpedo-tube. Ramming was out of the question; the wooden motor-boat was so lightly built that she could not have run into a floating log without staving her bows in. Against the side of the staunch old ironclad she would have crumpled into a mass of splinters.

Yet apparently this was the mad Englishman's suicidal intention. Unswervingly he held his course for the battleship's rusty broadside, now spitting flame from barbette, sponson and turret. The gunboats joined in as if over-anxious to squander their newly acquired wealth of ammunition. The sea was lashed to foam, the air filled with the shrieking, crackling flight of thousands of projectiles from Mauser bullets to an occasional ten-inch shell. But none of them hit the mark.

"They can't get the range. We're going so fast; the gunners can't get the range!"

Thornton said this to himself, over and over, like a prayer. Closer and closer they came, until he could feel on his face the heat of the burning gases from the gun-muzzles and dropped down lest he be blinded by the blast of the next discharge. Stepping into the wheel-house, where Garmey was looking through a dead-light as if by some sea-wizardry he could see through the green and white water that covered it, and smiling pleasantly as if he liked the view. Thornton reached for the Lewis gun. He felt that an atomizer full of cologne would have been equally useful under the circumstances, but he wanted the feel of a weapon in his hands at what seemed his last moment.

Then, before he could grasp the gun, the deck flew out from beneath his feet, causing Thornton to make a rather complicated somersault into the farthest corner of the wheel-house. As he lay there, peering upsidedown between his own legs, he had a vision of Garmey, still grasping the spokes of the wheel but no longer looking through the deadlight. Instead he was now staring astern with an anxious expression.

Unscrambling himself, Thornton got up and looked in the same direction. To his astonishment he still saw the broadside of the *Hidalgo*. Then he realized that it was no longer approaching but receding; the scooter had whirled about and was returning to port.

But for what purpose had it come? What was the sense of this craziest of maneuvers? Thornton was on the point of turning to Garmey and demanding an explanation when he saw a huge white column of water leap into the air alongside the *Hidalgo*. Higher than her masts it spouted. Then, as it fell, came the boom of a great explosion.

"Got her!" said Garmey quietly. "Smack between the funnels!"

"Got her?" echoed Thornton. What do you mean, got her?"

"With a Whitehead, of course."

"With a torpedo? But how—but when?"

"I'll show you presently. Look, she's going down fast! Those old-fashioned turrets heel her over badly with both big guns trained to starboard. Why don't they turn them the other way?"

The stricken *Hidalgo* was listing farther and farther, till the two could see her deck and the men sliding down it to drop into the water or else scrambling desperately on to her upturned side.

"Seems a rotten trick to run away and leave them like that," said Garmey apologetically. "But I fear there's no help for it. Ah, here come the boats from her consorts! That's good—sharks about, probably. I say, Thornton, have you any cigarets?"

Pursued by much useless gun-fire, the scooter returned to harbor. As she reached the entrance those on board her saw the *Hidalgo* roll, right herself and go down sternforemost in a cloud of steam from her bursting boilers.

Unheeding the frenzied greetings from fort and city, Garmey brought the motorboat back alongside the *Rapido*. There Mac, a short, deep-chested Islesman with grizzled red hair, emerged from the engine-room manhole. He was followed by a hitherto-unsuspected assistant, a slender youth in the greasiest possible dungarees. Wasting no time in post mortems, the two, more or less aided by a gang of native seamen under that accomplished linguist On Low, hoisted overside and lowered away one of the five Whiteheads arranged on deck.

Garmey, in the meanwhile, raised a long strip of planking down the middle of the scooter's sloping stern and bade Thornton look within. The American saw a narrow, boarded-up well with harbor-water below.

"Cleft stern, you see," expounded Garmey. "We carry the torpedo in there on those curved metal supports reaching out from either side. When we tire of its company, all we have to do is to pull the cradle out from under the little dear and down it plumps into the briny. This other device knocks the starting-lever over and away she swims in our wake."

"In our wake!" gasped Thornton. "Do you mean that we had a torpedo following us just now?"

"Oh, yes. There's very little danger of its overtaking us, for we're running as fast as it is, if not faster. The main thing is that it follows the course of the scooter, so that all we have to do is to steer in the right direction, launch the Whitehead when we're close up and then hop out of the way. Quite simple, you see."

Thornton swore fervently.

"Who's the genius who invented this stunt?" he demanded.

"I really don't know," said Garmey. "One of the Thornycroft people, I fancy. They've been turning these out since '16. C. M. B.'s, they call them: Coastal Motor-Boats—because they're no use for cruising or in rough weather. But on a day like this they could buzz out of any one of a dozen bases and reach midchannel in thirty minutes. Used to carry a couple of depth-bombs to drop on Fritz, besides the Lewis for sea-planes. I thought we could do without the bombs here, you know, but you never can tell when a gun will come in handy.

"Now we'll have a try for one of the destroyers."

AS SOON as the adventurers re-emerged from the harbor mouth they found the Federals ready and waiting. The *Jaguar* and the *Tigre*, encouraged by the silence of the forts, had stood in close to the outer edge of the mine-field and now they pounced together on their tiny foe. Steaming in line ahead, diagonally across the scooter's course, the two swift modern destroyers seemed far more formidable than the ponderous, obsolete *Hidalgo*. Their guns rattled ceaselessly as the motor-boat turned to starboard, until the opposing forces were racing toward each other down the converging sides of an acute angle.

To Thornton, gazing over the roof of the wheel-house as before, it seemed a miracle that out of so many missiles none hit the target, even by chance. He did not know that more than one German destroyer-flotilla, with the best range-finding instruments in the world and gunners who shot far straighter than any ever trained in Mayacan, had failed to scratch the gray paint of the elusive C. M. B.

Narrower and narrower grew the angle as the three craft sped toward the spot where their converging courses would meet. Thornton could see every motion of the excited gun-crews on the leading destroyer and recognized her as the *Jaguar*. Intent upon her gunnery, he failed to note the discharge of another species of weapon. Not until it was right upon them did he see the broad, white path across the blue water: the unmistakable wake of a torpedo!

"Zig-zag!" he shouted frantically, as he dropped back into the navigating-well to inform Garmey of the new peril.

But Thornton's foot slipped on the wet bottom-boards, causing him to stagger and fall. His chest struck the edge of the high coaming, on the side away from the enemy; to keep himself from diving overboard, he clutched and held it with both hands. He wondered how much of the boat he would carry with him when a second later they would all go soaring up into the clouds.

Then, as he hung there over the side, he saw the water that raced past seethe for an instant with a billion bursting bubbles. Before it vanished astern, Thornton recognized the exhaust of the *Jaguar's* torpedo, streaking away from them toward the shore.

"Holy bob-cats!" he gasped. "Went right under us! Draft twenty-six inches—never touched us!"

Before he could say anything else or alter his position he was all but pitched overside by the scooter's changing course like a billiard-ball caroming off the cushion.

When the boat had quit navigating on its side and returned to a more or less even keel, Thornton saw that they were running for home. Evidently Garmey had launched the second torpedo. But both destroyers were still steaming on their former course, triumphant and uninjured.

"Missed!" groaned Thornton ruefully.

Even as he did so, the *Jaguar's* stern disappeared in a water-spout that rose high in the air and fell back into the sea before the heavy thud of the exploding war-head reached their ears.

"Have to aim a bit ahead—allow for the other fellow's speed and let him run into it—like partridge-shooting," explained Garmey. "Enjoying yourself, old dear?"

"I've been in battles," gasped the admiring landsman. "I've been in earthquakes, and I've been in love! But this beats 'em all!"

"It's not bad sport. Now, why don't those five gun-boats close in and try to cut us off instead of hanging on to the spot where the *Hidalgo* went down? Do you know, I think their morale is beginning to weaken."

"You've got 'em going!" declared Thornton. "Come on, let's get another tin fish and clean 'em up!"

BUT the Federals had had their fill of that sort of fighting. When the C. M. B. shot out of the harbor for the third time the blockade had already been raised and the hostile squadron was putting out to sea.

"I say, that won't do, you know!" declared Garmey firmly. "They'll run slap into the *Westfield* if we don't overhaul them."

Faster than ever, the scooter darted in pursuit. She rapidly overhauled the fugitives, none of which could make more than a dozen knots an hour. This was true even of the *Tigre*, as long as the destroyer was handicapped by towing the disabled *Jaguar*.

"They're having a peach of a fight on the *Tigre's* quarter-deck!" Thornton called down presently from his favorite point of vantage. "There goes a guy overboard! Some of the bunch are trying to cast off the tow-rope, I guess! No, by gravy, they're hauling down the flag! The whole bunch are kamerading!"

"My word!" marveled Garmey. "They're running up our colors on the whole fleet!"

"They've changed sides!" said Thornton as the Federal red and blue came down and the green and gold of the revolution went up on every stern. "Regular thing in Mayacan. You've got a navy now, admiral!"

"Can't say I'm proud of it. However, I'll give the beggars a bit of a polish and then drop down the coast and blockade San Angel. That and your getting your ammunition ought to do for Estranza."

"Sure will! Inside of a month he'll be down and out and Varona will be president. They ought to put up a statue of you and your boat as the saviors of Mayacan, don't you think?"

"I hope not. When this job's done, I think I'll toddle back to London and have another try at my uncle's office. That doctor-chap was right when he said that a year or two of this climate would pull me round. My nerves ought to be fit for business now, don't you think so, Thornton?"

"If they aren't I'd sure like to see you when they are!" declared the American.

# When the Storm-Flags Flutter

### by R. de S. Horn

ALL DOWN the coast the storm warnings were fluttering. One big hurricane was shrieking close upon the tail end of another. And overhopeful skippers who had put to sea ere the howling fury of the first one had scarce subsided to helpless whimperings now cursed their optimism savagely as they turned their bows toward port again. For it was no ordinary gale, this, by any means.

But to the Revenue Cutter *Narragansett*, swinging to anchor in her customary berth, the fluttering colors were portentous of nothing, except perhaps just a little extra cheer in the thought that *she* didn't have to go out and face the blow. For the *Narragansett* was just in from a storm-racked week off the Cherrystone Islands, weary, battered and short of coal. And now, according to the Revenue routine, it was her turn to rest in port while the *Algonquin* from the next station took over the "ready" patrol.

So the *Narragansett* swung to her cable and drowsed. The smoke barely lifted from her stacks as the stokers fed her boilers with a minimum of coal. The "off-watch" section of her crew—those of them who were not going ashore—sought out preferred cubby-holes and corners where they could sleep undisturbed until the sounding of the supper call. Even the officious quarter-deck had surrendered to the general listlessness when, a few minutes before eight bells, Cadet Corley saluted Lieutenant Robertson, the officer of the deck, with the customary—

"Ready to relieve you, sir."

"Very well, sir," returned that person with languid precision. "This is the way things stand. Anchored in ten fathoms, with forty-five fathoms of starboard chain. Boilers number 1 and 3 in commission. Captain and all the officers ashore except you and me; list on the desk there giving telephone numbers and addresses where they——"

He broke off suddenly to reprimand a seaman who had come up and saluted.

"Wait a minute, messenger! Don't you know enough not to interrupt the officer of the deck when he is being relieved?

"As I was saying, Corley, that list tells where they can be found if necessary. U-u-uh!" The lieutenant paused to smother a huge yawn. "Pardon me."

"What's the matter—sleepy?" inquired the cadet sympathetically.

"I could sleep a week! Didn't get much the last few nights. I'm going to hit the bunk just about two seconds after I get through turning the deck over to you. Now, let me see. Two liberty parties have already landed and the last boat with fifteen men is just shoving off now. That leaves us with about a third of the crew on board. Of course you know that the *Algonquin* takes over the patrol duty for the next five days."

As he finished the lieutenant turned to the man he had reprimanded.

"Now, messenger, what is it?"

"Message from the radio room, sir," reported the seaman, handing it over.

Lieutenant Robertson glanced over the yellow slip with sudden surprize.

"Hello! What's this — what's this? 'Steamer ashore on Riffle Rocks. Life-savers unable to reach wreck from beach. Proceed to sea immediately to render assistance. *Algonquin* disabled with broken shaft.' Whew! That's a proposition. Short of coal, two-thirds of crew ashore, and ordered to sea immediately!"

"I don't guess you'll be hitting that bunk after all, then," suggested Corley with a grin.

"No. I'll say not! I'll keep the deck for awhile. You take that list, go ashore to the nearest telephone and tell all the officers we are ordered to sea and for them to return aboard immediately. And on your way stop that liberty boat and send all that last liberty party back again. Messenger, tell Machinist's-mate Wiley I want to see him immediately."

In the interval between the departure of Cadet Corley and the coming of Machinist Wiley, Lieutenant Robertson radiated orders like a mad spark-gap. The boatswain's-mate was instructed to stand by the anchor gear and be ready to heave in upon the word. The quartermasters spread out the necessary charts, tested out the bridge and steering gear, and set the sea-watches.

"Messenger said you wanted to see me, sir." Machinist's-mate Wiley, with soiled dungarees, and black grease-smears on his face, had very evidently come straight from the engine-room.

"Yes. We've got orders to put to sea immediately. The engineer officer and most of the other officers are ashore and they may not get back in time. In that case you'll look out for the engine and fire rooms. Everything all right below?"

"Feed pumps been giving us a little trouble lately, sir, and I was just fixin' to overhaul 'em. We can fix them all right for a few days, anyway. But we're short of coal."

"Find out how much we've got, then, and let me know right away."

"I can tell you that now, sir. I heard the water-tender say this morning we didn't have but half a bunkerful left."

"Well, you'll have to watch that. Don't let 'em waste any. Put on another boiler right away, turn the engines over whenever you're ready, and be ready for the gong at any minute."

Machinist's-mate Wiley went back to his stuffy engine-room again, while the officer climbed to the bridge, where over chart-board and rulers he began to figure out courses and distances. He was still busy with the dividers when Cadet Corley returned from the beach.

"Couldn't get a one of them on the 'phone, sir. The first lieutenant's sister said they were having a big carnival or something up at Hill City and she thought they'd all gone over there, maybe. I stopped the liberty boat, though."

The lieutenant finished a calculation, drew a line on the chart, and looked up.

"That's bad—but we can't wait. I'll have to be the skipper and navigator, and you'll have to be the rest of the watch-list. Wiley will look out for the engine and fire rooms. Now go down and take charge of the fo'c's'le while we heave in."

AN HOUR later the *Narragansett* was slipping in and out among the harbor craft on her way to the open sea. Even there, inside the shelter of the projecting point, they could feel the whip of the wind and the short chop of a running sea, and that it was far worse outside was evidenced by the miscellaneous assortment of vessels that were anchoring all over the harbor, wherever holding ground could be found.

As the *Narragansett* slid past a huge freighter that was sneaking in out of the hurricane, a pair of arms waved on the freighter's bridge and her bull-necked, red-faced captain bellowed out something, but the swirling gale snatched the words from his mouth and swept them off to leeward. The cutter's skipper shook his head and waved a deprecating hand in return as the little ship made on out toward sea.

Outside, they were enlightened as to what the freighter's captain had probably bellowed. The whole sea ahead was one huge howling storm-tossed wilderness where waves had gathered from a thousand miles to swell and froth under a leaden sky. As each successive roller upreared to crest, the raging blasts swooped down upon it like incredibly keen knives, slashing away the top and hurling it off to leeward in a thousand yards of hissing, slithering spray. Even in their oil-skins and sou'-westers the top-side crew of the cutter were drenched to the skin and the weather decks were afloat with water ere the first giant comber had overtopped the forecastle and buried it deep beneath its yeasty surge.

With a disgusted grunt the little cutter staggered beneath the blow, rose slowly and soggily from out the waters and prepared to meet those countless other billows that would hammer at her through the long night. And hammer they did while she creaked and sighed, pitched and ascended, and the lookouts and the two officers on the bridge fortified themselves with cup after cup of steaming coffee. It was a struggle worthy of the Heroic singers, but the *Narragansett* pitched and rolled and plunged ahead, proving her builders for worthy men.

It was nine o'clock of the murky morning before she arrived off the Riffle Rocks and her lookouts could distinguish the dull blur of the wreck rising above the low spray clouds. Even in the normal seas it could scarcely be distinguished from the gray rock background itself, and when some unusually mighty roller hurled itself upon it the battered hulk vanished completely behind the upthrown curtains of brine. Farther inshore the huge breakers that curled and crashed told their own story of the life-savers' failure.

From the assembled ranks of all the *Narragansett's* crew not on immediate duty the lieutenant selected a half-dozen husky volunteers.

"Now men," he said, in asking for six volunteers to man the life-boat, "I want to tell you that it's a big risk you're taking. You can see for yourselves what it's like out here, and in there it's probably worse. What I'm asking for is six volunteers, six strong huskies that can pull an oar. Being swimmers doesn't matter. The best swimmer in the world couldn't swim out of that sea. Now—all you men that are willing to volunteer take one step forward."

Then he grinned in spite of himself as the whole assembly moved forward. With a quick eye he selected the six largest men and sent them aft to the whale-boat which had been chosen as the one best able to live in the churning sea. When she was all manned and ready to be lowered Lieutenant Robertson turned to his junior officer.

"Corley," he said, "you can navigate, can't you?"

"Yes, sir," replied the cadet affirmatively.

"Well, it won't be hard. Once make the Bluff Light-ship and you can pilot from there in. You're short of coal but Wiley will look after that for you."

He turned toward the whale-boat, but the cadet stood squarely in his way. The cadet's face was white but determined.

"No, sir, Mr. Robertson," he said doggedly, "I'm going in that boat."

"But there can't but one of us go, Corley. One of us has to stay and look out for the cutter. And you can take her in all right."

The cadet did not budge.

"No, sir," he persisted obstinately. "You're the commanding officer, but as second in command it's my job to go in that boat. I've handled small boats more than you have lately. No, sir, it's my job—and I'm going."

The lieutenant looked at his mutinous subordinate for a second and then dropped a hand lightly on his shoulder.

"All right," he said briefly. "Take her then. I'll try to make the best lee I can for you. But listen. When you get to the wreck, go around and come in on her from the shore side. You might find a bit of a lee there; but you'll have to keep a bright lookout for timbers from the wreck. Get hold of a line from her if you can and make her crew slide down it to the boat. That's all—except good luck!"

A MOMENT later the whale-boat had dropped into the water to begin her long struggle. From the edge of the bridge the lieutenant watched her until she was lost to view in the smother of foaming crests. Then came the seemingly endless minutes of waiting while he paced up and down with clenched fists, straining his eyes in an endeavor to pierce the curtain of mist. It afforded him only a slight measure of relief to muster another volunteer crew in case it was necessary to make a second trip. But he promised himself with grim determination that *he* was going that next time.

Suddenly one of the lookouts shouted and pointed out a small black spot that had mysteriously appeared, bobbing among the waves between the cutter and the wreck. After a few minutes it resolved itself into the whale-boat, pulling choppily out again and evidently having a stiff time of it. With the lieutenant conning, the cutter was slowly maneuvred to give the best possible lee, and when the boat finally did come alongside a barrel of oil had been broached and was being squirted over the rail in half a dozen places.

To the surprize of the *Narragansett's* skipper, when the soggy dripping boatmen had been hauled aboard there appeared only one unfamiliar person among them. He, from the shrunken water-soaked blouse that still clung to his shoulders, was evidently the wrecked steamer's captain.

"You the only one?" demanded the cutter's skipper. "Where's the rest of your crew?"

"All went ashore in the breeches-buoy day before yesterday, except the mate and me. Masts went over the side yesterday noon and they couldn't get any more lines out to us. The mate washed overboard last night."

"Why didn't you two leave when the breeches-buoy was still running?"

"Well, I was the captain and it was my job. I thought there might be a chance for the owners after all."

The *Narragansett's* commander gave him a disparaging glance.

"You're a —— fool!" he said shortly

The captain from the wreck returned the look with interest.

"Mr. Corley tells me you came out here short of coal, and with only two officers and a third of your crew," he answered coolly. "So you're another."

Lieutenant Robertson grinned cordially.

"Here, have a cup of coffee," he offered. Then, changing the subject, "Well, Corley, how'd you make out?"

"Pretty fair, sir, after we once got under her quarter. The boat got half-a-dozen mighty bad smashes from some pretty big timbers, though. I don't believe we could have made it much further with her. She's hooked on now, all ready to hoist, but I don't think she's hardly worth the hoisting."

"Well, we'll hoist her any way and see. Pipe her in, bo'sun."

As the boatswain piped shrilly upon his little whistle the crew surged back upon the boat-falls. Slowly, foot by foot, the whale-boat rose toward the davits until her splintered gunwale and dented strakes could be clearly seen. She was almost level with the ship's rail when with a crackling, splintering noise she suddenly folded up in the middle and then broke into two separate halves.

"That settles it. Nobody else better fall overboard," announced the boatswain as he cut away the dangling wreck. "We ain't got a boat left fit to put overboard in this sort of weather. But I don't guess it matters much anyways. We're goin' straight back home now, I reckon."

"That's exactly what we're not going to do," contradicted the *Narragansett's* commander. "Here, Corley, here's something that came while you were gone."

He passed over the yellow slip and the cadet read the wireless message—the message that bade them go to Latitude Umpty-Ump North and Longitude Steenty-Steen West of the Atlantic Ocean and pick up the crew of a three-masted schooner reported to be in distress there.

The cadet handed the message back.

"It ain't right," he said wearily. "Why can't they get in distress sometime when we got more coal and everybody ain't so tired?"

"If you're any tireder than I am," returned his superior, "you're walking in your sleep right now. Hand me those rulers. What Latitude was that—Umpty-Ump North?"

Longitude Steenty-Steen West and Latitude Umpty-Ump North was eventually found, or at any rate approximated as closely as possible by dead reckoning. There was nothing at all to be seen there but writhing wind-whipped water, and beyond that still other wind-bred waves. But this was much as the cutter's commander had expected. With a touch of the wheel the *Narragansett* changed her course and began to steam slowly along in the direction that wind and wave would carry her.

"She's probably been drifting along for some time if she's completely disabled. We may sight her anywhere along here now," observed Lieutenant Robertson to the wrecked captain who had reappeared on the bridge in borrowed clothes and oil-skins.

Whereupon Cadet Corley, without waiting for personal instructions, went around and notified all the lookouts to keep a sharp eye open for anything that looked like a schooner, three-masted, probably no sails.

But the hour passed with no report of a sighted vessel. Another hour and still the *Narragansett* lurched along with a following sea.

Suddenly the lieutenant gave a startled cry.

"Left rudder!" he yelled. "Left rudder! Hard left rudder!"

And without waiting for the helmsman to respond he leaped, himself, to the wheel and began frantically to spin it around.

For a long moment the cutter continued straight ahead; then slowly, very slowly, her nose drifted around and she began to slide off in a new direction. As she did so, a low, bulky, indistinct mass slipped past her starboard side, almost near enough to touch. For a stupefied second the men on the bridge stared down upon it as it swept by. Then with a switch of the rudder and a jingle of the engine-room telegraph the cutter came round into the wind again.

"Wonder if that's her?" speculated the cutter's commander doubtfully.

"Sure that's her," affirmed the wrecked skipper. "Didn't you notice the length of her?"

"Didn't have time to notice anything." The *Narragansett's* commander pushed back his southwester and wiped his forehead. "U-umm, but that was a close shave! I just saw her for a moment, lifting on a wave, and right away I made a jump for the wheel."

"Close is right, all right," agreed the wrecked skipper. "Two minutes more and she'd have scraped the bottom plumb out of you. Look at her now, flush with the water. Must be loaded with lumber, I guess, the way she's floating."

Bringing the cutter around a bit more, they passed the wreck a short fifty yards on the beam. Sometimes they could see her clean-swept sparless decks as she rose on a crest; at other times the welling waves swept beyond and over the floating mass as if it had never been there.

"Well, there's one thing certain—nobody there to pick up," observed the cutter's commander grimly. "It 'ud 'a' been some job for us to have tried, with no boat left."

He stepped back to give an order to the helmsman. Presently he turned to his junior officer.

"Tired, boy?" he inquired sympathetically.

The junior officer turned a pair of swollen, wind-blurred eyes to him.

"Pretty tired," he confessed.

"Well, we'll all be sleeping in six hours more. We're going straight in now."

"Bet we don't," declared the cadet pessimistically. "Bet we'll get another one of those darn radios ordering us to Alaska or Halifax, or somewhere around there!"

The ship-wrecked skipper laughed, but just at that moment, like a prophecy fulfilled, the radio striker stood before them.

"Message from the radio room," he announced, making a sudden grab for the railing as the *Narragansett* lurched heavily.

The other officers waited expectantly while the captain glanced at the message.

"Proceed to Cuttysink Light," he read aloud. "Light reported out. Put it in working order and leave men to operate it until relieved."

"I knew it!" declared the cadet. "They're going to keep us out here the rest of our lives, like the Flying Dutchman!"

"Cuttysink Shoals," pondered the lieutenant. "Fifty miles, about. Maybe our coal 'll hold out till we get there. And when we do get there we haven't got any boat. How are we going to get a man to the light, I wonder?"

"Make him a raft, or let him swim," suggested the rescued captain.

"He'll have to do both, I expect," concurred the cutter's commander. "'Tisn't a bad idea, though. Messenger—tell the boatswain to make a good strong raft out of some barrels and planks, and to break out a lot of one-inch line."

The messenger departed and shortly thereafter a black, grease-stained face appeared over the edge of the bridge-deck beading, followed up the ladder by a grimy pair of dungarees.

"What is it, Wiley?" demanded Lieutenant Robertson, sighting the apparition. "Anything wrong below?"

"No, sir." The body in the dungarees hauled itself unsteadily up on the bridge. "Only the bo'sun's-mate said as he heard we was goin' to Cuttysink Shoals Light."

"That's right, Wiley."

"Well, we ain't got coal enough, sir."

"How much have you got left now?"

"Less'n a hundred tons, sir. Not hardly enough to get home on, sir."

"Cuttysink Shoals Light is out, Wiley. We've got to go by there, first."

"Well, we ain't got enough to—" The machinist's-mate perceived his commander gazing squarely at him and stopped. "Aye, aye, sir," he finished, with a typical engine-room salute.

But as he waddled down the ladder, they could distinctly hear him saying to himself—

"But we ain't going to make it."

"I'm thinking so, myself," admitted the lieutenant in agreement. "But Cuttysink Light has got to be lit, or some of those high-powered trans-atlantic hotels 'll be bustin' themselves on the rocks. Corley, muster the crew for me."

And standing before his work-wearied gang, for the second time the *Narragansett's* captain called for a volunteer.

"Men," he said, "this time I want a swimmer—the best there is. I'll tell you why. Our only good boat is gone and we've got to put a man on Cuttysink Shoals Light. The bo'sun has made a raft back there and we're going to try to send our man over on it. We'll take the ship in as close as we can and then drift the raft down on the end of a line. If we don't hit the light-house square our man will have to swim for it. After he once leaves the ship he will never be able to get back—he'll have to make the light or he's a goner. Now, are there any volunteers?"

Possibly a third of the men stepped forward. After taking a brief look over them the lieutenant stopped in front of the end man.

"Jenkins," he said, "you're all right—but you're a —— liar! Last Summer, seems to me, we had to send the boat out for you one day at swimming drill."

The end sailor grinned sheepishly.

"Well, I was goin' to wear a life-belt," he began apologetically, but the lieutenant cut him short. "Get the —— outer here!" he barked wrathfully.

Jenkins fell back and the lieutenant continued down the line. Finally he stopped in front of a short, squat man, a negro.

"Hammon," he said, "I'm going to pick you. I know you're a good swimmer and a good machinist as well, which may be just as necessary. I don't know whether it's something wrong with the keeper or the light, but whatever it is you'll have to fix it. When you get near the light-house, and when you're climbing the ladder, you'll have to watch out to keep from being slammed against it. Now, do you want a life-belt?"

The negro shook his head.

"Naw, sir. Hit 'ud only git in the way. I'll swim fur it."

"Very well. Better take a look at your raft and have it fixed to suit yourself. And be ready to go over at the word."

* * *

THE lieutenant returned to the bridge and began some very careful figuring on the chart relative to wind and current, as well as depths of water.

His calculations were all finished by the time the stumpy red light-house was sighted, and he had marked the spot where he should place the ship. While he maneuvred the *Narragansett* into the exact location to windward that he had planned, the boatswain prepared the raft for launching while the signal quartermaster exhausted all known methods of signaling, trying to get an answer from the light-house.

"Must be something wrong with the keeper," speculated the wrecked skipper, after watching the quartermaster's vain efforts. "Maybe he's fallen overboard, or is sick or hurt or something."

"I hope so, anyway," returned the cutter's junior officer. "If it's just the keeper, Hammon can take his place. But if the light's busted he may not be able to get it going again."

At this point further surmises on the subject were cut short by a violent waving of the captain's arms as a signal for the immediate launching of the raft.

Fascinated, they watched it as it drifted, plunging and struggling, down toward the light. The line was serving an evil turn as well as a good, for it continually snubbed the raft into the rollers so that they washed completely over it. It was under water as much as it was above, but through occasional glimpses they could make out the black spot still clinging to it. Finally it became painfully evident that the raft would miss its objective by at least a hundred feet.

"Look!" exclaimed the quartermaster. "He's going to swim for it!"

As the raft rose on a tremendous crest they could just see the black splotch clinging to the very edge; then it sank into the trough again. When next it rose the black splotch had disappeared.

During the breathless minutes that followed there was not an eye but was strained for a glimpse of a black speck bobbing among the waves. No one could claim even so much as a glimpse of it. Finally the *Narragansett's* commander lowered his glasses regretfully.

"Gone," he said briefly. "No use trying any more. If he couldn't make it, nobody can. Besides, it 'll be dark in an hour mo——"

He was interrupted by an excited yell from the rescued skipper, who, after that one yelp, had immediately glued his eye to the signalman's glass again. "No—no! By——, he's made it! He's climbing up the ladder now. He's going—he's inside!"

The *Narragansett's* commander gave a sigh of relief. "Well, we'll give him ten minutes to see if he can get the light started, and then we'll ease on home," he announced.

But before half of the ten minutes were up a bright gleam from the light-house suddenly pierced the gathering dusk, and a moment later it began its slow, steady sweep over the waters.

"Good!" exclaimed the *Narragansett's* skipper. "Give him a sweep or two of the searchlight, and then let's go." He called out a course to the helmsman and then sat down wearily on the signal-man's seat in the corner of the bridge. "Yes, let's go—till the coal gives out."

"Till the coal gives out!" In the excitement of the past few minutes Cadet Corley had utterly forgotten the emptiness of the bunkers. Now the question had returned again to harass his care-wearied brain with new worries. "Till the coal gives out!" Well, what then? The storm would keep storming, the waves would keep surging, and the *Narragansett* would drift. By-and-by they would drift on to a lee shore. They had picked the ship-wrecked skipper off a ship that had drifted on a lee shore.

Cadet Corley's jaded brain refused to worry any further. He was tired and sleepy; he didn't care if they did drift on to a lee shore. It did not affect him one way or the other when the machinist's-mate from the engine-room suddenly reappeared on the bridge. In his dirty oil-dashed dungarees he looked like a huge bird of ill-omen.

"Mr. Robertson," he announced grimly, "we'll never make it back. Coal's plumb out. We're running on the last sweepin's of the bunkers now."

The cutter's commander only opened his eyes and sat up a little straighter.

"Wiley," said he indulgently, "the ship's full of fuel. Get an ax-gang and start on the tables and chairs, and anything else you see that isn't necessary. And there's a piano in the ward-room. Why, there's enough wood on board to last you a week!"

The machinist's-mate saluted and turned away.

"Wood don't burn long enough by itself to keep steam up," he observed over his shoulder, "but I reckon I can get enough oil from the store-room keeper and the engine-room to go along with it and make it do."

The skipper watched him go.

"That's something for you to remember, Corley," he remarked slowly. "All in the day's work. Gosh, what a day it's been! Storm above, devil below, no coal in the fire-room, and —— on——"

His voice trailed gently out and he sagged slowly over against the rail.

Cadet Corley was wide awake on the instant.

"Grab him—grab him!" he yelled at the ship-wrecked skipper, at the same time leaping to carry out his own orders. "He's all in. He's fainted!"

Together they pulled the *Narragansett's* commander to a sitting position. He blinked twice and opened his eyes.

"What's the matter? Sick?" inquired the cadet anxiously.

"Sick, ——!" answered the lieutenant groggily. "Jesh shleepy. Went to shleep—on my feet. Makes nearly fifty hours we've been out of the bunk now—don't it, Corley?"

The cadet nodded affirmatively.

"Look here," broke in the skipper from off the wreck, "what's the matter with my taking the deck for awhile and letting you turn in? I'm competent to do it. And I can call you if anything turns up I don't know about."

The *Narragansett's* commanding officer stood up on his feet, blinked his eyes several times and opened and closed his jaws rapidly for a moment.

"No," he answered firmly. "My ship—job. I'll take her on in, myself. Messenger—go, tell the cook to send me up another pot of that boiling hot coffee!"

He turned away swaying slightly.

"My job. I'll take her in myself," he repeated.

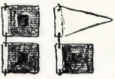
AT EIGHT o'clock the next morning an incoming trans-atlantic liner whistled angrily at a battered little vessel that persisted in hogging the channel ahead. In spite of the repeated whistles the battered vessel continued leisurely on up the river until some twenty minutes later she switched suddenly off to starboard to some apparently chosen spot, and there anchored with a vast rattle of chain. On the liner's bridge a fat little gold-braided man jumped up and down in his rage.

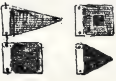
"I knew it!" he exclaimed wildly.

He was intensely huffy, and felt that he had just cause to be. There were several thousand dollars worth of dishes broken in his dining-rooms and several hundred disgusted sea-sick passengers in their cabins. But to his mind the worst of all, at that moment, was the thirty-six hours delay from the storm when he had been almost within the certainty of breaking the trans-atlantic record.

"I knew it!" he shouted again. "I knew it was one of those —— Yankee cutters, just by the way she acted—sneaking along in front of me and making me lose another half-hour. That's all their blasted cutters do—slow us down in the channel, hold us up off Quarantine, and always expecting us to get out of the way for them. I'll show 'em! Some of these days I'll run one of 'em down!"

The idea appealed to him peculiarly and he repeated it with vicious satisfaction. "Yes, by ——! Some of these days I'm going to run one of 'em down!"





# Pony Tracks

### by Henry Herbert Knibbs

I WAS ridin' for The Blue,
  When she wrote to me from France;
Wrote and sent her picture, too!
  Talk about that there Romance!

Wrote to me, The Ridin' Kid,
  Just a cattle-chasin' cuss,
But you bet I'm glad she did.
  Say, somewhere she read of us

Cowboys of the Western range;
  That there joke's about the best!
For we'd think it mighty strange
  If the ranges *weren't* out West.

Sent her picture—and it's great!
  Slim and neat from heel to head,
Stylish dressed and settin' straight
  On a dandy thoroughbred.

Said she read some poetry
  All about a Roan Cayuse....
Well, if it *was* wrote by me,
  I ain't makin' no excuse.

'Cause, sometimes I *got* to sing
  When my pony jogs along;
Seems his hoofs just click and ring
  Till he's hammered out a song

Kinda like the sound of rain,
  Kinda like the sun and sky,
Shadows streakin' crost the plain,
  Little clouds a-floatin' by;

And a puncher and his hoss,
  Ridin' trails that never end....
Well, I showed it to the boss
  And he sent it to a friend.

Friend he run a printin'-shop,
  And a first-chop magazine;
Say, my heart sure took a flop
  When that printed song I seen.

Boys they joshed me stout and strong,
  Called me "Little Warblin' Kid,"
Me, a rawhide six feet long
  From my boot heels to my lid!

Wonder if her eyes are brown?
  Wonder if they're blue or gray?
Wonder if she lives in town?
  Wonder if she'd ever say—

"Howdy, pardner!" Shucks! Why she
  Never seen a Stetson hat,
Never seen a guy like me;
  She could never talk like that.

But you bet I learned her name;
  Asked the schoolmarm straight, one day;
Print and sound ain't just the same,
  But it spells like this— "Edmée."

Wrote that she would like to ride
  Where the world is big and free,
But she said her family's pride
  Kep' her where—she ought to be.

Says she's longin' for the life
  Out here where the cattle roam:
Well, I never had a wife,
  Never hung my hat to home.

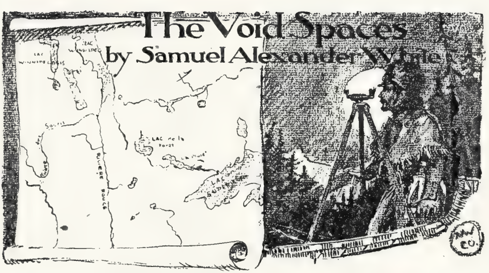
Guess that letter got me hard;
  Prettiest girl I ever seen.
That's what comes of singin', pard,
  Printed in a magazine.

When I'm ridin' round the herd,
  And the stars are shinin' bright,
I keep sayin' that there word
  "Edmée"—till I got it right.

"Edmée!" But my pony's feet
  Keep a arguin', and say,
Slow and steady—and repeat—
  "France is—mighty—far—away!"

# The Void Spaces

## by Samuel Alexander White



*Author of "Blended Brigades," "The Call of the Crimson Star," etc.*

POISED high in the air as sentinel on top of the stockade gates of the Hudson's Bay Company's post of Chimawawin, Perouse Trentoine stared down to where the Saskatchewan River broadened into Cedar Lake. His keen black eyes had caught sight of something upon the sparkling waters and now he discerned it to be a fleet of boats in motion. Huge craft with pointed prows and long overhanging sterns, they glided swiftly up-stream, each propelled by sixteen oars, and Perouse instantly recognized them as the supply boats of the company on their annual trip inland from James Bay.

"De York boats, Thompson," he yelled at the post. "*Mon Dieu*, can't you hear?"

But the post door was closed. The trader Thompson apparently could not catch his warning cry. So after dancing helplessly a minute upon the top of the stockade and measuring furtively the near approach of the York boats, Perouse slid off the stockade wall, leaped down from the firing steps inside and dashed across the palisaded yard.

"De York boats, Davvy, here from York Factory," he thundered, crashing open Thompson's trading-room door and springing into the middle of the floor. "Queeck, dey be at our gates."

David Thompson, always explorer, surveyor and geographer first and fur trader after, looked up from the maps he was sketching. He seemed like a man aroused from a dream. His youthful face was rapt, his eyes filled with a vision and it took him a moment or two to come back to the realities of the post.

"Is Governor Colen or chief district factor Gardhouse with tuh boats?" he demanded at last in a voice that betrayed Welsh parentage.

"Ba gar, I'm don't know about Colen, but I'm afraid dat Gardhouse must be," declared Trentoine. "I'm catch de blaze of wan chief district factor's red flag in de bow of de first boat an' de long red pennant dat trails behind."

"By St. John!" exclaimed Thompson, jumping up. "Art in a fix then. Get our own flag flying, Perouse. Where can tuh post men be? Find and put them on tuh firing steps quick and give them a salute as they come. Gardhouse hast never been a very good friend of mine, and 'twill put him in a fine rage if he catches me unprepared."

"*Oui*, I'm know dat, me," nodded Perouse as he dashed for the yard. "Dat's why I be slip off de stockade and run to tell you."

Trentoine rushed off to gather together the post Indians, a dozen Wood Crees who, besides the two white men, formed the only garrison of the wilderness post. Thompson darted for the flagstaff to raise the banner of the ancient and honorable company with his own hand. But before either man could accomplish his purpose there came a tumultuous hammering at the gates.

"Open, Thompson, open!" ordered a voice which both Trentoine and Thompson knew as Gardhouse's.

Thompson stopped halfway to the flagstaff. Perouse swung about in despair as he was entering the doorway of the store to find the Indians.

"Hurry, Perouse," urged Thompson, "swing it wide."

Trentoine, diverted suddenly from his search, shifted the gate bars and Gardhouse and his crew of the leading York boat trooped through. Gardhouse was a huge man; his gold-laced uniform that he wore with ostentation as an official of the Hudson's Bay Company bulged to the brawn of his frame. He carried his character, his individuality, upon the surface of his showy person, and it smote an observer suddenly, forcefully, as his ready fist was wont to smite in anger.

Thompson and Trentoine saw him as they had always seen him, a hard man given to drink and kindred evils, uncivilized where he deemed there was no need of civilization, an iron ruler of subordinates, a man who held his high post by his sheer ability to get trade returns for his company.

"What's the matter now, Thompson?" he demanded, confronting the trader with his black-bearded, swarthy face wreathed in its habitual sneer of scornful challenge. "No flag flying. No salute. Mooning over your maps as usual, I suppose?"

"Took me rather unawares," confessed Thompson, instinctively making his way again toward the flagstaff. "But it is not too late yet. Wilt raise the banner and Trentoine can find tuh post men in a moment to fire a salute."

Gardhouse's eyes, so sickly blue as to seem green, evilly and malignantly green as the eyes of a lynx, leered into Thompson's face.

"Never mind, Davvy Thompson," he stopped him peremptorily. "We'll dispense with flag-flying and salutes when they come so late as yours do. After all it's trade returns that count most, and if your beaver totals add up big I'll forgive you for the rest. You had better have Trentoine show the York boatmen where to put your trade goods and provisions, and let us get on into the post."

Thompson cast a swift glance past Gardhouse, staring through the open gateway of the post. So rapid had been the advance of the York boats, so precise their movements since Perouse Trentoine had first sighted them from the top of the stockade, that the five boats that had followed Gardhouse's were already moored at the Chimawawin landing.

The Cree and Ojibway boatmen who had rowed them up with the long oars or pushed them in the bad places with glistening spruce poles, were dismantling the crafts of both oars and poles, which they piled on the bank while they brought forth their packstraps and prepared to pack the contents of Gardhouse's boat up to the store.

* * *

"HERE, Perouse," Thompson called, "open up tuh store and find our own help. Now, Gardhouse, wilt go in and total up?"

While Perouse speeded to prepare storage quarters to accommodate the bales, boxes, bundles and sacks of the packers from the York boats, Gardhouse and Thompson passed on into the trading-room where Thompson's maps still lay open on the counter.

As bad luck would have it, the maps lay on top of Thompson's ledger, the all-important book of trade returns buried under sketches seemingly much less important, and Gardhouse gave a snort of indignation as he swept the maps aside and unearthed the ledger.

"Just as I thought!" he roared. "Mooning over your maps when you should be attending to the fur. What in creation is the good of those things?"

"Things?" flamed Thompson, rescuing a large main map and a lot of lesser sketches from Gardhouse's rough hand as a mother rescues a cherished child. "'Tis a greater thing than your sordid furs, Gardhouse. Wilt find that out when 'tis all surveyed and done with."

"Ho! Ho! Will I?" mocked Gardhouse. "And how much have you done already?"

He plucked half-curiously at the large main map and as if to vindicate himself Thompson spread it open on the trading-room counter. Gardhouse gazed down on a map of western Canada, of the country that touched on Hudson's Bay and stretched to the westward and the northward, a fur farm large as an empire, the *Pays d'en Haut*—the High Country that was the lure for the Eastern voyageurs.

Gardhouse saw that it was wonderfully well drawn, that it was dotted with fur posts in their exact locations, that amid the network of watercourses which veined it every river ran true.

There before his eyes were the headquarter posts on Hudson's Bay, the inland posts of the Saskatchewan country, the Athabasca country, even the far mouth of the Coppermine that Samuel Hearne had fixed. Gardhouse saw it all, yet it did not stir him. He saw in it no adventure, no romance, no danger, no hardship, no vision, no dream. He saw it simply as a mass of traced lines and noted that the southerly section was blank.

"What's this empty part here?" he demanded, somewhat puzzled.

"Ha!" breathed Thompson, losing himself in his dream once more and forgetting Gardhouse and his animosity.

"'Tis the void spaces there that must be filled this Summer. 'Tis tuh Northwest Fur Company's country that we must add to our own. Stretches westward from Lake Superior. Wilt map it thus this Summer—from Lake Superior to Lake Winnipegosis, from tuh Assiniboine River to tuh Missouri, tuh Red and tuh headwaters of tuh Mississippi, from tuh Mississippi back to Superior again. Canst understand, man? Tuh map wilt be complete and tuh Hudson's Bay Company wilt fur-farm this end of tuh continent. Save only tuh part that lies over tuh Rockies, for that must wait till we map it later on!"

"You talk big," admitted Gardhouse vaguely. "How much time were you calculating to take away from trade to make that survey?"

"Given good canoemen, could do it all this Summer while tuh waterways art open," glowed Thompson. "Or, counting unforeseen delay, could tie tuh tag end tight in tuh Spring at tuh latest. Have everything ready to start. Was only waiting till 'ee came to close tuh season's trade."

"Let us see how your trade runs first," suggested Gardhouse.

He opened Thompson's ledger and ran a finger along the totals for the season.

"Good Heavens!" he exclaimed as he read aloud the figures. "Twenty bales of beaver, four of fox, two of marten—a few muskrat and lynx. What under the sun is the matter with your returns this year?"

"They're about as usual, aren't they?" ventured Thompson.

"They're worse than usual," stormed Gardhouse.

"The total for last year, seventeen hundred and ninety-four, was bad enough, but this year's is a positive disgrace. Where in the name of all the Cree spirits have you spent your time?"

"Why, in tuh post routine," Thompson told him.

"Yes," sneered Gardhouse, "but in what post routine? I know by these figures that you haven't been here where you should have been. You've been over at Cumberland House most of the time where you could be near Peter Fallon's Northwest Fur post on Pine Island Lake. Star-gazing half your nights and girl-gazing the other half at Peter's half-breed girl."

"Pure breed, you mean," corrected Thompson, his eyes burning at his superior's insulting tone. "You know yourself that Silver Dawn is only a niece of Fallon's and pure Cree. Ha! and of higher station in her tribe and better born than any white woman hast seen inland."

"It doesn't matter," persisted Gardhouse. "You have no business wasting Hudson's Bay Company time that way over a Northwest wench."

"Dost know some other Hudson's Bay Company men who would waste it too if they could get entrance to Fallon's Pine Island Lake post?" flashed Thompson.

Gardhouse closed the post ledger on the counter with a bang and, his hands clenched, whirled threateningly on Thompson.

"What do you mean by those words, Thompson?" he demanded.

"Dost mean anything you like, Gardhouse," Thompson told him bluntly. "'Tis common knowledge in tuh country that you gazed on Silver Dawn yourself till Fallon closed his post to you. Too well born to mate with such as you, Gardhouse—those art his very words. Aye, and 'tis mainly because Peter's post gates still open for me that you hound me so hard. 'Twere not for Silver Dawn, wouldst not get cursed so loud for my fur totals."

"You Welsh-blooded brat! You charity-raised liar!" roared Gardhouse.

In his rage he seized the heavy ledger from the counter and hurled it straight into Thompson's face. Thompson had barely time to throw up his elbow and catch the ponderous missile on his arm.

The thud of it sent a vicious twinge of pain through his flesh and, spurred as much by the pain of the blow as by his indignation against the chief district factor, Thompson sprang forward and struck Gardhouse two heavy body blows with his uninjured arm.

Gardhouse staggered against the counter and closed with him, but as they wrestled in the middle of the room Perouse Trentoine burst through the doorway and writhed his lithe form between. Like a snake Perouse insinuated himself, sinewy, swift, powerful, darting his head in at the level of the combatants' waists and wriggling up till he could partially pry their locked arms apart.

"*Mon Dieu,* pull away," he entreated. "Dis ain't right, *Messieurs*—de chief district factor and de post agent fightin' before de crews. Ba gar, dat's bad for discipline. Ain't you be cool for wan philoposphic minute now?"

Gardhouse and Thompson staggered back, both chagrined that Perouse had caught them in their rage.

They admitted to themselves the wisdom of his words yet they could not cool their heated feelings all in Perouse's philosophic moment. They breathed heavily and their eyes still battled as they glared at each other.

"That settles it, Thompson," nodded Gardhouse malignantly. "You are finished with girl-gazing, star-gazing, map-making—everything. You'll cancel your survey this Summer and you'll stay right in this post and get the trade returns you haven't been getting in the past."

"By St. John, wilt do nothing of the kind!" defied Thompson. "My trade returns art all in for tuh season. Tuh fur is all down and wilt go as planned. 'Tis a long work hast carried on, Gardhouse, carried on in tuh face of violent opposition from 'ee. Wilt not be balked in tuh end of all. Wilt not quit when tuh goal is in sight. Must tell 'ee again wilt go on tuh survey."

"And I tell you again that you won't leave this post!" thundered Gardhouse. "You seem to forget the fact that I'm chief district factor here and that you are under my authority. I'll use means to enforce that authority.

"I have the men yonder to do it. I'll take over and put guards on the post equipment, canoes, provisions, arms. Supplies and all other equipment are Hudson's Bay property and I'll see that you don't use any of it for your fanatical scheme. If you leave this post it will be by *La Longue Traverse*—the Long Trail of starvation and death."

GARDHOUSE whirled swiftly as he delivered his ultimatum and strode out. Thompson and Trentoine could see him through the open doorway making his way to the river bank to carry out his threat. He broke in on the work of the packers from the York boats, summoning many of them to join his own personal crew, and came into the post yard again with the picked band at his back.

Some he placed in the store in charge of the supplies. Others he directed to the boat shed on the shore where the canoes were housed. Still others he brought to the trading-room with him and installed behind Thompson's counter.

Thompson looked on in silence for a moment, then with a nod for Trentoine to follow him stepped outside. He carried nothing with him but his large main map and his smaller sketch maps rolled up in a piece of buckskin under his arm and his precious instruments with which he took observations, packed in a little case he could carry in his hand.

His face was set and his eyes were as hard as flint. Whereas Trentoine had seen him as a dreamer—a man of visions when he first burst into the trading-room with the news of Gardhouse's coming—he saw him now as a man of action and determination.

"Perouse," he breathed with a finality in which there was a touch of sadness, "hast left the Hudson's Bay Company's service."

"*Mon Dieu!*" gasped Trentoine, scarcely comprehending the truth. "Since w'en you go do dat?"

"Since this moment," Thompson told him. "Hast written my resignation, not in ink but in my determination. Am going to join tuh Northwest Fur Company at Grande Portage.

"Peter Fallon's brigades from Pine Island Lake passed here last night, dost remember? Canst catch them about Lake Winnipeg if we drive hard. Art with me, Perouse?"

"Ba gar, I be follow you anyw'ere," asserted Trentoine loyally. "If you be resign, I be leave *aussi*."

"And tuh dozen post Indians?" Thompson demanded. "Canst count on them?"

"*Oui*, true as de compass needle, dose Crees," Perouse assured him with a quaint smile. "Ain't you read de future for dem ba lookin' troo your telescope? Ain't you be raise de wind for deir huntin' w'en you be take your observations? You say de word an' dey travel wit' you to de ends of de wilderness."

"All is right then," nodded Thompson. "Pass them tuh word, Perouse. They wilt stroll in twos and threes through tuh gateway of tuh palisades. But must not awaken Gardhouse's suspicion. Wilt idle out yourself. Wilt join all there myself to make a dash for one of Gardhouse's York boats and row down river. Should catch Fallon before Gardhouse catches us."

"*Oui*, ba gar," exulted Trentoine, his blood thrilling at the adventure, "dey'll have de *diable* taim catchin' us once we be get clear away. I'll be go queeck to tell dose Crees to move down to de shore."

Thompson paced the yard as if walking off his anger, his head bent, his eyes on the ground, but all the time his trained glance of the forest observer took in what went on around him. He saw, without seeming to see, Perouse Trentoine go down to the river bank as if to give the York boat-packers aid in unloading.

After Perouse drifted the post Indians in little knots and when Thompson counted twelve of them outside the stockade he himself idled through the gateway.

One of the six York boats, Gardhouse's own craft from which his crew had transferred his flag and pennant to the post, was already unloaded, riding high and light in the shallows. The other five boats were still full with the packers just beginning on another cargo.

Thompson waited till the majority of Gardhouse's men adjusted the pack-straps on fresh burdens and, bent under the weight of their loads, shuffled up to the store. Then he whispered the word to Perouse.

"Rush it out," he ordered, making a sudden dash for the empty craft.

Trentoine was right on his heels and the twelve Wood Crees also, running like the storm wind and seizing as they ran the oars and long spruce poles from the pile upon the bank. All together they tumbled aboard the York boat and began to shove out of the shallows with the poles. In the deeper water they could ship the long oars and swing the huge craft away.

Instantly with their boarding of the empty boat a cry of consternation arose from the post. Thompson, glancing up, saw Gardhouse tearing out of the trading-room he had usurped and shouting the alarm to the plodding packers. The latter dropped their packs where they stood at his cry and, whirling about, raced with Gardhouse for the departing York boat.

The craft was almost out of the shallows, all hands on the spruce poles, as Gardhouse and his men reached the waterline. In they plunged knee-deep, some of the more eager waist-deep, trying to grasp the gunwales.

"Mutineer, Thompson! Thief, Thompson!" roared Gardhouse, attempting to clamber over the York boat's overhanging stern.

"No mutiny about it, Gardhouse," laughed Thompson, shoving a long spruce pole into his chest and thrusting him back into the water. "Hast left the Hudson's Bay Company's service. Aye, and no thieving either. Art entitled to transportation and art only borrowing the York boat. Wilt find it down river, Gardhouse, when we are through. Before long wilt be in tuh service of tuh Northwest Fur Company."

While he spoke Thompson laid about him with his pole, cracking knuckles and heads, beating Gardhouse's men back and holding the York boat clear while Perouse Trentoine and the Wood Crees shipped the oars. Then he dropped his pole and seized an oar himself.

"Now—pull!" he commanded, putting his back into it.

"*Oui*—pull lak *diable*," shrilled Trentoine, standing up at the steering sweep and bending his whole weight on the handle.

Thirteen oar-blades flashed as one and bit the deep water. The great York boat leaped suddenly from amid the muddle of Gardhouse's men splashing about in the shallows and darted down-stream. As it shot away Gardhouse waded out, rating his men for their tardiness and waving them to the other loaded boats.

"Out with the stuff," Thompson heard him roar. "Throw it on the bank. Quick, we must catch that scoundrelly Welshman. He has something up his sleeve."

Still the unloading of the other five York boats, roughly as it was done, took some time. Thompson, heading out for the broader water of Cedar Lake, glimpsed them hurling the last bales ashore.

"Art launching now," he panted. "By St. John—pull!"

THE lead they had was a good one and they were determined to hold it, Perouse and Thompson setting course and pace, their twelve Wood Crees holding the speed like a machine. The hot Spring day laden with the smell of the wild rose flitted away and the cool of the evening came on and still Gardhouse had failed to catch them.

Sometimes, on the breast of a little lake or in the broader expanses of the Saskatchewan itself, they would get sight of his York boats straining behind, but it was only for a moment, for the pursuers would be lost again almost immediately in the mazes of the river. Then as the mellow dusk of the North descended the pursuers were seen no more.

The shore shadows blackened the waterpath they traveled and the river bends grew more pronounced as they approached Lake Winnipeg. As if alone, they bored on down the Saskatchewan toward its mouth, yet Thompson knew that craft were afloat not far from them—Fallon's before, Gardhouse's behind.

Swift as had been their flight, he had noted the river signs as they sped along—broken twigs on overhanging branches, foot marks on the portages, bits of floating débris cast aside, the fresh ashes of cooking fires on the bank that told of the progress of Fallon's brigade since it had passed Chimawawin the night before.

"Wilt sight them soon," he prophesied as they reached the river mouth and their York boat took the first surges of Lake Winnipeg.

"W'ere you t'ink dey be?" asked Trentoine.

"Not far down tuh lake shore," Thompson asserted confidently. "Watch for them, Perouse, and hail them at once. Gardhouse also must be close behind."

They shot along the edge of a low sand delta flanked by towering bluffs and beyond the bluffs, not half a mile ahead, dim in the velvet darkness, showed the vague shapes of the ordered canoes of Fallon's brigade.

"*Arrêtez*, Fallon!" shrilled Trentoine. "*Mon Dieu, arrêtez!*"

Like an echo of Perouse's cry a shout arose behind them. Thompson looked back from his rower's seat to see Gardhouse's York boats swinging out of the mouth of the river they had just left.

"Yonder they are!" he heard Gardhouse yell. "And by the saints there are some strange brigades farther down the lake—Northwest Fur brigades I'll wager and Thompson's running for them. Row like demons."

Thompson settled himself lower in his rower's seat, pulling his oar in a mighty sweep.

"Drive hard," he urged. "Wilt be a last spurt."

With redoubled vigor the Wood Crees bit in with their blades, hurling the huge York boat in long crashing leaps toward Fallon's brigades. At the hail from the lake behind him, Fallon had ordered his canoemen to pause a moment, and wonderingly he and his niece Silver Dawn stood up in their craft trying to make out the boat that had called on them to stop.

"It is a Hudson's Bay Company craft." Silver Dawn spoke in Cree, as her keen eyes pierced the gloom.

"Yes," nodded Fallon, "a York boat from James Bay."

"And the others that are chasing it—are they not Hudson's Bay Company boats too?" the girl demanded.

"True, they are also from the Bay," Fallon identified.

It was very strange to Fallon that any Hudson's Bay Company York boat should run from kindred craft; strange too that any should appeal to him by name here on Lake Winnipeg unless some bold Northwesters had achieved an exploit and were handling the oars of the leading craft themselves.

Instantly he feared a ruse and resolved to take no chances. He gave the order for the canoes to line up in a crescent on the water, the ends of the crescent touching the shoreline of the bluffs. Thus they lay on their oars while their leader hailed the approaching York boat.

"Who comes there?" he sharply challenged in Cree, the plunging craft that leaped straight on toward him.

"'Tis Thompson, Fallon—'tis Davvy

Thompson," came back the answer in a voice he knew well. "Open your ranks and let us in. Hast broken with Governor Colen's fool Gardhouse and the Hudson's Bay Company."

Silver Dawn exclaimed in wonder. Fallon gave a swift command to his crews. There was a sudden dipping of the paddles, a skilful shifting of canoes so that a water-lane opened in their ranks. Flying in full career, Thompson's York boat shot through and beached within the crescent.

"Ha! Silver Dawn," he laughed as he and Perouse clambered aboard Fallon's canoe. "Wilt have company down the Winnipeg. Dost mind that, girl?"

"I am glad that you come to us," cried Silver Dawn in Cree. Her dark eyes were shining like stars in the gloom and under her shawl Thompson could see her bosom rise and fall with emotion.

"Is good then," exulted Thompson. "Fallon, distribute my men aboard your canoes among your own crews. Wilt leave tuh York boat here for Gardhouse. Art done with it now."

Immediately the Indian crew of the borrowed York boat abandoned it on the sands for the pursuers to recover and lined up, awaiting their appointed places in the Northwest canoes.

"What did you quarrel about?" asked Fallon as he directed Thompson's Wood Crees to step aboard here and there among his crews.

"Tuh maps," explained Thompson. "Got orders to stop map-making and bring in fur. 'Twas Governor Joseph Colen's orders from York Factory of course, but 'twas Gardhouse's tongue that gave them. Dost understand that?"

"Yes," spoke Silver Dawn softly, "we understand."

"A bitter tongue, the tongue of Gardhouse," mused Fallon, "and his deeds are also bitter. Here he comes now."

With the entrance of the York boat through the crescent of canoes the crescent had closed again. In the face of an unbroken line of Northwest craft and a score of rifle muzzles poking over the scrolls of the birch-barks, Gardhouse brought up his fleet abruptly with a roar of foaming sweeps and lurching hulls.

"That is right, Gardhouse," nodded Fallon calmly. "Another stroke of your oars and we would have riddled your York boats. What do you want with me?"

"Nothing with you," growled Gardhouse, his green eyes shifting from Thompson to Silver Dawn and back again. "But I want that renegade Hudson's Bay Company man yonder."

"There is no Hudson's Bay Company man here," spoke Silver Dawn oratorically. "We are all Northwesters in these brigades."

"True," grinned Fallon, "and I warn you not to meddle with us. You have about eighty men there. I have twice as many here. If you lay even a hand on my gunwales I will sink you in the Winnipeg."

Fallon turned and motioned his brigades to proceed. One by one they fell out of the crescent formation and pointed along the shore. Gardhouse was outnumbered and helpless to prevent them going and the knowledge that he was momentarily so helpless did not cool his temper any.

"By the saints, you'll pay for this piece of impudence, Fallon," stormed Gardhouse. "Thompson has maps there that belong to the Hudson's Bay Company and I'll get them yet if I have to go down to Grande Portage for them."

"Art beginning to see tuh value of tuh maps at last, eh, Gardhouse?" mocked Thompson. "Well, 'tis not so valuable now as 'twill be. When 'tis finished and hung in tuh halls of Grande Portage instead of York Factory you and Governor Colen will be gnashing your teeth."

WITH a scornful wave of his hand Thompson settled himself in the canoe beside Silver Dawn as the craft glided away in the wake of the others. Straight down Lake Winnipeg they dropped and through the Winnipeg River, Lake of the Woods, Rainy River and Rainy Lake to the Pigeon River that poured into Lake Superior at the Northwest Fur Company's wilderness headquarters of Grande Portage.

They landed at Fort Charlotte on the Pigeon whence a long carry circumvented the wild river stretch and came out on the sandy lake-shore of Superior. Up over the wooded hills flanking the Pigeon they climbed, Fallon's crews and Trentoine's Wood Crees packing the fur bales they had brought down with them.

A full nine miles the foot-path ran from the Pigeon River end to the Superior end at the post of Grande Portage. It was twilight of a mid-June evening when they set foot upon it, and the twilight thickened to intense dark by the time they reached the farther end, so that the post lights blazed out suddenly before them like jewels against the ebony tracery of the surrounding forest.

Below the blazing post, on the sandy shore of Superior, glowed more lights—the crimson fires of the canoe men who had brought down the fur or freighted the trade goods westward from the Northwest Fur Company's eastern headquarters of Montreal.

Revelry was outside as well as inside the palisades. Northmen and Montrealers were eating and drinking, dancing and singing before their fires, their clamor outswelling the clamor of the Northwest partners' supper that went on within.

At the post gates which stood wide open, a Northwest watchman stopped them but Fallon gave the password and he with Silver Dawn and Thompson hurried on into the dining-hall. Crowded about the long tables that ran from end to end of the hall—tables buried under savory viands and flagons of wine—feasted the Wintering and Montreal executive partners of the Northwest Fur Company. Thompson saw a dozen he knew personally, by sight or by hearsay—McKenzie, McGill, Frobisher, Todd, McKay, Grant and others equally famous in the western world.

A pause in the feasting and a cry of welcome followed their entrance; scores of Northwesters shouting out a greeting, all speaking at once.

"It's Fallon! It's the *coureur de bois*, Fallon!"

"Ah! here comes Peter from Pine Island Lake."

"Aye, and Silver Dawn—princess of the Crees."

"Your health, Silver Dawn; your health, Fallon!"

"But wait!" It was McKenzie's authoritative voice. "Who is this with you, Peter? A Hudson's Bay man or I have taken too much wine for the good of my eyes. By the flag of Northwesters—yes, it is Davvy Thompson."

The assemblage stirred and stared incredulously for a moment, hardly believing that this was the flesh and blood Thompson who stood with the princess of the Crees amid their feasting tables.

"Davvy Thompson," repeated McKenzie, casting the eye of significance over his partners. "You have heard of him."

Heard of him? What Northwest partner had not heard of him? The little Westminster lad of Welsh parentage who first saw the fog of England in the parish of St. John the Evangelist in seventeen hundred and seventy! The fourteen-year-old boy the Hudson's Bay Company had drafted to Fort Churchill from the Governors of the Grey Coat School, the charity institution that had educated him in navigation, mathematics and surveying!

The stripling clerk who had understudied the great Samuel Hearne, copied the manuscript of his famous "Journey" and followed in his footsteps until his name was woven like the thread of adventure and romance all over the West. Heard of him? Here he was—twenty-five years old, and the magnitude of what he had achieved already shamed them all, grizzled Northwest veterans old enough to have fathered him. They acclaimed him with a roar, a roar that was fraught with wonder.

"How come you here among the Northwesters?" they chorused.

"Hast left the Hudson's Bay Company," Thompson answered.

"And you would join us?" they clamored.

"On one condition," stipulated Thompson. "Must not be handicapped by tuh necessity of bringing in trade returns. Must have free leave to complete my surveys and finish my map. Wilt look at it?"

In the glow of the moment he spread his main map on the feasting tables, explaining it, outlining his plans for the Summer months as he had outlined them for Gardhouse.

"Wilt start from Grande Portage," he announced. "Wilt end at Grande Portage. Tuh map wilt hang in Grande Portage if all is right. Wilt give me a free hand?"

"By the saints, you have it," granted McKenzie, speaking for all the partners. "Sit down, Thompson. Sit down, Silver Dawn. Sit down, Fallon. Let us seal the bargain in meat and wine. You can sign your indenture tonight, Davvy, if you like, and start as soon as you see fit."

"Wilt be fine," agreed Thompson, "if canst hold Gardhouse off. Swore he would have tuh map if he had to come to Grande Portage to get it."

"Let him come," growled McKenzie grimly. "There'll be many a Northwester here to meet him. And never fear for your survey, Davvy. You can go out under the screen of the Northwest brigades going back to the *Pays d'en Haut.* You can come in behind Montreal brigades either in the Fall or next Spring. So we'll drink to your health and the success of your expedition."

McKenzie filled his own glass and waited while the flagons passed around.

"Now," he proposed when all were ready, "to Davvy Thompson and the void spaces of his map!"

In a single draft the Northwesters drank it.

*"Vive Monsieur Thompson!"* they cried. *"Vive la Compagnie du Nord-Ouest!* Fortitude in distress! May he fill the void spaces for us."

"Aye, tuh void spaces," murmured Thompson, his eyes on Silver Dawn as he acknowledged the toast. "Wilt be none when we all meet here again."

IT WAS Thompson's farewell to Silver Dawn because Fallon was not going back with the High Country brigades. He was making the journey clear through to Montreal to freight on the immense cargo of down-coming furs avalanched at Grande Portage. Also, he would route back some of the Eastern supply fleets to Grande Portage in the Autumn and Thompson hoped to strike Lake Superior once more as soon as Fallon. Perhaps in mid-lake he would meet Silver Dawn again; perhaps at Sault Ste. Marie; perhaps at Grande Portage post itself. Who knew? It was in the lap of the gods of the forest.

Within the next few days Thompson completed his preparations and went forth from Grande Portage with the Northwest brigades going back to the *Pays d'en Haut.* At the mouth of the Winnipeg they passed Gardhouse in camp, extending his visit of inspection to the other lake posts.

"Well, Thompson," was his sneering greeting, "it seems you have joined the Northwesters as you promised."

"Yes," Thompson assured him. "Am in tuh service of tuh Northwest Fur Company and by their leave am going on my survey as was planned. Canst not stop me, Gardhouse. Hast protection of these Northwest brigades through the Winnipeg, so wilt bid 'ee good-by."

"Good-by," growled Gardhouse, "but remember going out is one thing and getting back is another. We'll see if you get back into Grande Portage as easily as you set out."

In the glory of his going, in the ardor of the undertaking, Thompson thought little of Gardhouse's threat then but when the Lake Winnipeg and Lake Winnipegosis brigades dropped away one by one for their own scattered posts of the interior, when he parted with the last one of all and swung south from Winnipegosis on the Assiniboine River with Perouse Trentoine and his Wood Crees, he had time to sense what Gardhouse planned.

If Gardhouse succeeded in swiftly marshaling his Hudson's Bay forces at Grande Portage, many things might be accomplished by one blow. Thompson's finished work might be snatched from him; the Northwest country wrested back for the Hudson's Bay Company; the girl Silver Dawn dragged forcibly away by the arms that desired her. The surest way for Thompson to cheat him of the opportunity was to reach Grande Portage first, before Gardhouse could gather his forces from the Bay and move them south.

So Thompson threw himself into his work with a frenzy, stretching his days to endless length on the trail, spending his nights at astronomical observations or filling in the lines of his map. Rapidly the map grew as the swift months flitted by on the green and gold wings of Summer.

Upon the blank section now showed the tracing of the Assiniboine country down as far as the Souris River; now the plains of the Mandans rolling across to the Missouri; now the famed Red River; now the headwaters of the Mississippi and finally the south shore of Lake Superior itself.

It was Autumn. He was on the last stage and as yet he had no word on the trails of the movements of Gardhouse. No word on the lonely stretches—but when he swung round eastward to the Sault and despatched Trentoine ahead into the settlement he immediately found out.

*"Mon Dieu,* transportation between Grande Portage an' Sault Ste. Marie be suspended," Perouse wailed as he returned to make his report.

"Wan eastern brigade be de last dat has gone troo to Grande Portage, wan brigade routed ba Peter Fallon. De Hudson's Bay Company be moved all deir brigades under de command of Gardhouse down to Grande

Portage an' de Northwest headquarters be blockaded. No canoe, no man, no food, no fur can be travel east or west from it."

"Is so, then, Perouse?" sighed Thompson a little wearily. "But one thing is good. Peter Fallon and Silver Dawn must be safe at Grande Portage. Was worrying about them. As for us, wilt have to run tuh Hudson's Bay Company's gantlet."

BACK westward along the North Shore of Superior they pushed; the snarl of Autumn merging with the frosty breath of Winter and smiting them over the breadth of the lake failed to stop their survey as they went. Then, the last observation taken, the last curve of the lake-shore fixed in position, and they broke through a roaring gale into Grande Portage bay.

"Ba gar!" gasped Trentoine as their canoes swung around the wooded island that partially sheltered the bay. "Look dere."

Thompson raised his head and stared on scores and scores of Hudson's Bay Company canoes massed in the harbor in the bitter weather behind the shelter of a sharp-angled canoe pier.

"Ba gar!" repeated Perouse aghast. "How we break troo dat mob?"

"Wilt not know how till we try," Thompson told him grimly. "Hast not seen us yet with tuh lake rolling in this wind but tuh post people have. See, on top of tuh stockade yonder, McKenzie and Fallon—aye and Silver Dawn! Listen—what is McKenzie yelling?"

They shielded their ears from the gale to catch McKenzie's cry.

"The beach, Thompson!" he trumpeted. "Keep away from the pier. Run past and land on the beach."

McKenzie's last word was drowned in the roar of the wind against which a sudden thunderous shouting from the Hudson's Bay Company men sounded faint and weird. They too had sighted Thompson's canoes amid the long rollers that tumbled through the channel and they sprang to their own craft within the canoe harbor to hold the blockade.

"Ho! Ho!" laughed Gardhouse evilly as he ran out on the canoe pier and leaped aboard his own craft to command his massed brigades.

"Thompson, I told you the getting back would not be as easy as the going out. Hand over your map before we strip and pillage you."

"Wilt see 'ee in Hades before you lay a hand on it," gritted Thompson.

He made a feint of drawing his canoes in to the pier, as if in spite of McKenzie's advice, and then suddenly swerved past the angle of the cribwork, darting across the outer edge of the canoe harbor and driving straight for the sand beach below the post.

"Paddle hard, Perouse," he breathed. "Tuh post gates art opening yonder. McKenzie and Fallon art timing their blow as we land."

As they shot past the pier, the Northwest forces burst en masse from the post gates. McKenzie and Fallon had been holding them inside the stockades with difficulty for several days, curbing their desire to go out and skirmish with the men of the Hudson's Bay Company; saving their strength undiminished for the moment of Thompson's coming.

This was the moment, and in a great wedge they rushed to the beach to cover the landing. But Gardhouse with his vast fleet of canoes was still between Thompson and the beach, and he laughed mockingly at the apparent futility of the Northwesters' attempt.

"Ha! Ha! I'll strip you clean, Davvy, before your fine Northwest friends can help," he gloated.

Yet the laugh died on Gardhouse's lips. A sheet of flame, coming as if from nowhere, flashed in front of his eyes, and he looked up to see Silver Dawn and a dozen more of the Indian and half-breed women of the post hurling pots of blazing pitch into his canoes. Unmarked in the excitement of the moment they had issued from the back of the post while the Northwest men ran down in front. Every utensil—pots, kettles and pans, that they could lay hands on was filled with the burning resin and with unerring aim they bombarded the Hudson's Bay birch-barks only a few paddle-lengths away. Instantly Gardhouse's whole fleet burst into flame. A big sizzling kettle fell amidships in the Hudson's Bay commander's own craft just as Thompson's canoes came boring on for the beach.

"Ha!" exulted Thompson at the sight. "Canst see what a Northwest maid can do, Gardhouse? Well, wilt teach you tuh might of a Northwest man."

His paddle blade swung down on Gardhouse's head. Gardhouse swayed and with a cry of fury seized the burning kettle from his canoe in his hands. He poised it to hurl the scorching stuff into Thompson's face, but the latter's paddle flashed again, knocking the thrower sheer over his gunwale.

His clothes enveloped by the blazing pitch, hair and beard singed, his eyes half blinded, Gardhouse went down into the water to be pulled aboard by one of the few Hudson's Bay Company canoes that had managed to smother the flames. For the rest, they were strewn on the sandy beach as Thompson burst through the burning barrier, their crews fleeing forestward under the vicious onslaught of McKenzie's and Fallon's Northwesters.

"Wast splendid work, Silver Dawn," lauded Thompson as he sprang out beside her.

"The wind was right," explained Silver Dawn simply. "One had but to touch the birch-barks and they were gone."

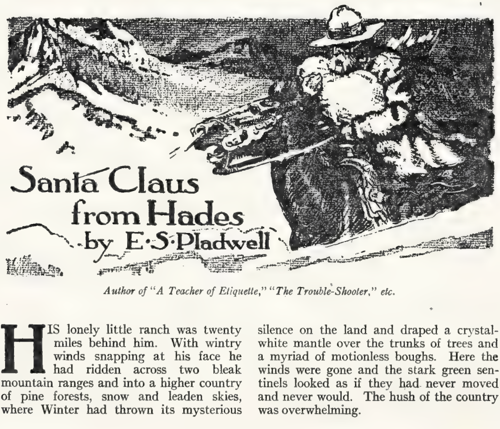
"Aye, and that hast saved my map for me. Wilt hang it for me in tuh post, girl?"

Eagerly he drew her by the arm into the banquet hall, and as he spread his completed map Silver Dawn pinned it on the wall. For a second they gazed on it, while McKenzie and Fallon and the victorious Northwesters came trooping back from the pursuit of the Hudson's Bay men.

They were laughing in their triumph and shouting greetings to Thompson but at sight of the map upon the wall they all stopped, suddenly struck silent. The void spaces were filled at last—four thousand miles of virgin wilderness mapped for the Northwest Fur Company by one man.

"By the saints, Davvy," breathed McKenzie, scarcely above a whisper, "it is a famous wilderness feat. Name your own reward."

"Reward?" laughed Thompson, passing an arm across the beautiful shoulders of the Cree girl beside him. "Why, 'tis Silver Dawn."



# Santa Claus from Hades

by E·S·Pladwell

*Author of "A Teacher of Etiquette," "The Trouble-Shooter," etc.*

HIS lonely little ranch was twenty miles behind him. With wintry winds snapping at his face he had ridden across two bleak mountain ranges and into a higher country of pine forests, snow and leaden skies, where Winter had thrown its mysterious silence on the land and draped a crystal-white mantle over the trunks of trees and a myriad of motionless boughs. Here the winds were gone and the stark green sentinels looked as if they had never moved and never would. The hush of the country was overwhelming.

It was Christmas day. The rider, however, had forgotten all about it. In fact he was headed for a certain low resort, still twenty miles away, where he knew he could obtain a fresh supply of illegal liquids and get thoroughly jingled in spite of all the prohibition laws in Arizona.

Back in his quiet cabin, with the wind soughing around his chimney and playing ghost-tunes on his home-made door, he had become a little tired of himself. Perhaps he sensed he was getting aged. The tang of his lonely, independent, self-sufficient life was missing—gone like the excitement and thrills of his wild and reckless youth. Once the terror of a Wild West county, bully, killer, bandit, outlaw and train-robber, he had come to a point where he was pacing his floor restlessly, wondering what was the matter with him.

The aggressiveness of an indomitable lifetime came to his rescue.

Winter had shackled his soul and held him prisoner in his cabin. It was the only restraint he had ever borne, in spite of the frantic efforts of many eager sheriffs, and the instant he recognized his abasement he snorted angrily, donned boots and spurs, combed his magnificent white beard, saddled his beautiful sorrel horse, tied an empty jug and three rattling canteens to his saddle, gathered a few eatables, and faced the enemy.

"Durn it!" he muttered. "I'll make life wuth livin' or I'll quit livin'!"

Winter retorted by slapping his face, chilling his flesh and obscuring his trail; but he had gone twenty miles and was easily good for twenty more.

He rode between the pine trees, down an easy slope and into a quiet little valley carpeted with white. He came to a turn and happened to look to his left where, far up a gully, a miner's shanty had stood abandoned for fifteen years. The old frontiersman reined in. His keen right eye—the left was long since shot away—noted certain signs of human occupancy, such as rags in gaping window-panes.

He became curious. Having nothing much on his mind he decided to investigate. Once he would have been chary about approaching strange places; but time had rendered his old crimes unpunishable and Arizona had made peace with him.

He trotted up to the door, dismounted and knocked. There was no answer except an indistinct exclamation. Allowing a reasonable time he finally turned the rusty knob and walked in, blinking at the darkness.

There was a gasp. Then, "Santy Claus!" screamed a childish voice in ecstasy.

Framed in the entrance, with the light from the closing door tinging his great beard and softening the glare of his belligerent gray eye, he looked it. The lights and shadows had played tricks with his tough old face. The lines of crime and sordidness were gone. Broad-shouldered, snow-covered, towering to the low ceiling like a god from Valhalla, clad in a great coat and with hat in hand, he seemed the incarnation of childhood's deity come to give judgment on the good and the bad.

"Santy Claus!" came the awed voice of the child again.

THE old miscreant's eyesight became adjusted to the semi-gloom and he saw a vision—a little girl's ecstatic face framed in golden curls that shimmered softly in the poor light from the window. She was trembling with excitement, staring with blue eyes wide open.

"Heh!" he grunted awkwardly, taken aback by his sudden promotion.

His keen eye wavered from the child's stare and noted a tumbledown cot in the corner, with a ragged blanket covering a human form which moved and then slumped back wearily. In two strides he was at the bed, looking into the pallid face of a woman with unkempt grayish-brown hair and eyes that seemed indifferent except for a sudden unearthly flicker.

"F-father!" she whispered, trying to bring forth a tired arm. "I knew—you'd meet me at the—gates!"

"What? Well, I'm durned!" he exclaimed, stepping back and staring helplessly.

The old reprobate was not used to this sort of situation. He was more accustomed to hurting than helping, but he saw that something must be done in this case, so he straightened, took off his coat and threw it over her, and then brought forth a precious flask only half full—the last of his present supply.

"Drink this!" he commanded, holding it to her mouth relentlessly. She choked and gagged but took it, turning away.

A small, insistent hand was pawing his

knee. He turned and looked into a wistful, appealing little face whose exquisite contours seemed wan and pinched while her big blue eyes seemed to plead.

"Santy Claus?" she quavered as if fearing a rebuff.

"Who? Me?"

The old ruffian began to remember the date. He saw it was up to him.

"Why, durn it, I guess I am," he admitted dubiously. "I'd sort of forgot."

He dug into a pocket and produced a glittering twenty-dollar gold piece. The child's expression lightened and she clutched it tightly; yet there was still an unspoken question in her eyes. He looked puzzled, then stared about the bare room and understood.

"I guess I'm a durned fool!" he muttered, making for the door.

In a minute he returned, bringing a paper bag containing a chunk of beef, several biscuits, some pickles and a plug of chewing tobacco. The eatables were grasped by eager little fingers. The stern, irascible old gunman began to feel a queer contraction in his throat so he turned to the woman, now looking at him with somber intentness.

"Better, ma'am?" he asked.

Her voice seemed to wheeze and croak.

"Yes, thanks," she coughed. "It's kind of you. I'm glad you came." She took another breath. "It's—pneumonia or something. Six days here. Snowed in."

"Take some more!" he ordered, producing the flask and forcing it upon her.

There was a long silence while the man stood by the bed awkwardly. At length she was able to resume, drawing long, labored breaths.

"Snowed in. We came on a horse and the blizzard struck us. Where is the horse? Gone? Well, never mind—we ate everything and I got—sick."

There was another long silence but the whisky was starting to take effect. He had given her a terrific jolt of it. A wan tinge of color came to her cheeks and she talked more rapidly, touching on personal matters with a frankness which under other circumstances would have been indiscreet.

"We lived in Nipa valley. My husband, he—left. My fault, I guess." She halted for a while. "I tried to work the ranch. Two years. Too much for a woman with a baby. I let it go." Her voice took on a slightly defiant intonation. "I started for Gila City to get a divorce. They told me I could make him support the child—the only way."

The woman caught herself and raised herself slightly.

"I'm telling you—so you'll know," she explained. "I may not—make it."

There was appeal and calculation in the woman's desperate eyes, as if she wondered if this man could, would, guarantee the fate of her child. He sensed the plea and realized it was put straight up to him.

He could not refuse if he wanted to. Even this old hellion was human. He did not know just what he could do but he realized he must do something, so he accepted fate's challenge.

"I—I guess I can fix things," he responded, clearing his throat. "Who was your husband, ma'am?"

"Abe Swift."

The old bandit's eye narrowed. His friend, the sheriff of Gila county, had recently pointed out Abe Swift from among the convicts of the penitentiary as a smooth card-sharp, tin-horn gambler, forger and seller of fake mining-stock. The old bandit knew it was true. Abe Swift had sold him some crooked stock in a mythical mine once, but Abe Swift returned the money because otherwise he would have had the stock rammed down his throat. The transaction with Abe Swift had been summary, profane and highly abusive.

The woman caught the look in the old bandit's eye and sensed there was something wrong.

"I guess—it may have been my fault," she hastened to explain. "We—we quarreled."

"Yes, ma'am," he responded courteously. "How long was you married?"

"Seventeen years."

The white-bearded stranger was startled. He looked closer at the woman, wondering how any one could hold sway over that shifty-eyed crook for seventeen years. Then he understood. She had been beautiful once, very beautiful. The cameo-like profile of the child proved it. It was like the mother's.

"You—you spoke about your father some time ago," he murmured. "Who was he?"

"James F. Lane—Jim Lane. He died when I was a girl—shot—shot by a devil when he had his hands on a fortune! He found a mine. He wouldn't tell where it was. A drunken highwayman—'Bull' Judson—a human fiend—murdered him in a saloon. It left me an orphan."

"He tried to draw——"

The old bandit started to say it but discovered his tongue was tied. He somehow found himself hot and uncomfortable, almost trembling. He was "Bull" Judson.

The stuffy little room swam before him. In a flash his mind went back thirty-five years to one of a row of board saloons in a ramshackle cow-town.

He saw himself and a dozen well-armed desperadoes gallop up the street, dismount with a great flourish and swagger into the saloon. He was boisterous, quarrelsome and reckless that day. A sheriff was hot on his trail and he itched to perform some dare-devil act that would enhance his sinister reputation and make people kowtow to his ego.

In the saloon he found a quiet, respected cattleman drinking. It was Jim Lane. Something prompted the bandit to bullyrag Lane into telling where he found the mine. Lane had tried to avoid it, but that made the tormentor more persistent. He grew cynical, overbearing, insulting. Names were called. Lane put down his glass and reached backward. He was too late. Judson's forty-five kicked backward and Lane fell like a log.

And Judson had laughed and swaggered out with his crowd while the people on the street ran for shelter. Laughed!

The old man was electrified. Looking down the corridors of time, he saw himself in truer perspective. He who had killed men lightly now witnessed one sample of what he had really done. As if illuminated by a lightning-flash that revealed a whole lifetime in one instant, he understood the meaning of five words.

"It left me an orphan."

One twitch of a trigger-finger had deprived this girl of a father and the wealth that might have been hers. One act of a half-drunken desperado had clouded her whole life and probably thrown her into the arms of a card-sharp, tin-horn gambler, forger and crook. The explosion of a three-cent cartridge thirty-five years ago had brought her to this shanty to die!

The old criminal was struck between the eyes. It was a long time before he found his voice, and then he did not recognize it.

"I guess we—we don't always know what we're doin'!" he muttered huskily, groping for words. "We—us humans is mostly a pack of durned fools. I—oh, what's the use?"

The woman's eyes were tiring again. The liquor's stimulation was losing efficiency.

"I—I know you're a gentleman," she quavered. "You will be—rewarded."

"Gentleman? Why, durn it, I'm the man that—" He caught himself. "Yes, ma'am," he responded meekly.

The mother was looking at her little girl and her helpless eyes softened in benediction. The child ran to her but the woman turned toward the man and pleaded with glazed eyes.

"Will you—will you promise——"

The old man was looking into the scales of justice.

"My Gawd, yes!" he cried.

"Alice!" murmured the woman. "Her name. My mother's."

She lay back, then raised herself slightly from the cot, crying like a soul in torment:

"Abe! Abe! Give me another chance—I didn't mean to make you angry, Abe! Just one more chance! Just one more—Excuse me, sir. My head's a little hazy."

She seemed to gather a last reserve of strength, speaking from gritted teeth.

"Keep—her feet—from—getting wet—and don't—let her—catch—cold!"

THE NEXT morning a stern-faced old man with haggard eyes, who looked as if he had suffered, saddled a beautiful sorrel horse and mounted, holding in his mighty arms a little human bundle that whimpered and yet clung to him with might and main.

"I'm a —— of a citizen to bring up a little gal," he soliloquized as he gathered the reins, "but, durn it, I started out to make life wuth livin' and—mebbe I have!"

"Santy Claus!" sighed the child tiredly.

"Yep." The old man's lips tightened in resolution. "I'm elected. That's my job from now on."

Somberly he turned the horse into the footprints it had made in the snow the day before and started on the long journey through the mysterious green-white forest, over the hills that led to home.

On his saddle was tied an empty jug and three rattling canteens.

# the Armadilho

### by Arthur O. Friel

*Author of "The Mother of the Moon," "The Ant-Eater," etc.*

ONCE, *senhores*, I met a fighting *armadilho*.

I do not wonder that you smile. You were just saying that the *armadilho*—or, as you call him, "armadillo"—has survived for thousands of years only because he is protected by his bony armor, and because he can run fast and dig a hole with surprizing speed.

You said too that even though he has big claws he does not fight with them, but defends himself only by digging them into the sides of his burrow to keep from being dragged out. Those are true words, *senhores*. The poor timid *tatu* of our Brazilian jungle will not fight even when you have caught him.

Yet what I tell you, droll as it may seem, is also true. Once I met a great *armadilho* more than six feet high, walking on his hind legs and seeking the blood of men. And how I met him, and what happened after, I will tell to you two American explorers tonight while we float on down the Amazon.

Pedro and I, two rubber-workers employed on the great *seringal* of old Coronel Nunes near the Javary river, had taken a canoe when the yearly floods stopped all work in the low-lying rubber forests, and in it we had gone on a care-free cruise into a land of low hills to the southwest. There, paddling up a river which gradually grew more narrow and swift, we had finally met a roaring rapid up which we could not go. So we had gone ashore to rest and smoke, intending then to turn back.

But then we had met a queer fellow who ate ants, and who lived there with a little monkey while he got gold from a small creek; and we had stayed with him until he took his fortune and paddled away homeward with it. And now, after sleeping through a wet night under a little shelter which we built at the foot of the rapids, we prepared to tramp up along the banks and learn how far the bad water extended.

"This *cachoeira* is a bad one, Lourenço," said Pedro, studying the white water raging down between steep rocky banks, "and if we were wise men we should turn back here. Yet if we were wise men perhaps we should not be here at all, but back in the dull safety of the *coronel's* headquarters."

"That may be true," I said. "But since we are only a pair of fools, let us keep on being foolish and see what our folly brings us. Often it is more interesting to be foolish than wise."

Laughing, we made up our packs, hid our canoe and tramped away into the rough hills beside the stream. The ground rose steadily, so that we were climbing all the time. But the bush was not so thick as that to which we were accustomed in the lowlands, and our march was not hard.

Often we stopped to look down into the

rapids, hoping to find that we could bring up our canoe by poles and ropes; but this, we soon found, would be impossible. Yet we kept on going, for no reason at all except that we had started in that direction; and at length we reached the head of the rapid.

There the stream swung sharply westward and the water became more quiet. Though it was now well past noon we kept on tramping for three or four hours more. Then the little river made another sharp turn to the right. At that place we stopped.

"A foolish sort of stream, comrade," grumbled Pedro, looking up it. "First it ran northward, then it came out of the west, and now it flows from the northwest. It runs all around itself before it really starts for the Amazon."

"I have known men who worked in the same way," I replied. "They could not do anything in a straightforward fashion, but made a great deal of work out of the simplest matter. And you can not expect a river to have more sense than men."

"All the same it is a foolish stream," he repeated. "And, as you said when we started, we are a pair of fools to be following it. The wisest thing we can do now is to keep on beside it and then cut back eastward through the bush, so that we can reach the canoe again without going back over the same ground.

"And yet," he added thoughtfully, "somehow I felt that if we came along this river we should find something that would interest us. And though we have met nothing I still feel that way."

Before I could answer there came to us a sound. From somewhere up that stream floated such a noise as we never had heard before in all our years in the jungle—a weird, wailing, droning sound that rose and fell and that might be near or far away.

WE STARED at each other. The sound stopped.

"*Por Deus!*" whispered Pedro. "That is something new. Have you ever heard such a thing as that?"

I shook my head. We listened, but heard nothing. And after a time I said:

"It grows late, comrade, and I have hunger. We can not find the strange thing this day, for night will soon be on us. Let us make camp."

He nodded slowly.

"That is sense," he agreed. "The thing may be miles away, for the wind is from the northwest and may have brought the sound from far off."

So we quickly built a *tambo*, slung our hammocks, made a fire and ate. Night fell, wet and black. Under the palm-leaf roof of our *tambo* we sat in our hammocks and smoked and argued about this strange thing. And suddenly Pedro broke off in the middle of a sentence and cried—

"Listen!"

Through the darkness the sound came again. And this time it did not stop. It rose and fell as before, wailing away in the gloom, with that droning undertone too.

"It is music!" whispered Pedro. "Indians?"

"No," said I. "It makes one think of Indians, but no Indians make that sound. There are no drums."

We sat silent, forgetting even to smoke. The music kept on, strange and sad, and savage too. It made us sorrowful, *senhores*, as we sat there in the blackness, and yet it also made us think of fighting, though we had no enemies here nor any reason to fight. Finally it died away, and we heard only the usual night sounds of the jungle.

"I do not think we shall go back to our canoe tomorrow," said Pedro. "There must be other wanderers here besides ourselves, and I would see what they are."

Then we slept, and knew no more until morning.

For much of the next day we tramped on up the stream, traveling quietly, talking little and listening much. Yet with all our bushcraft we could neither see nor hear anything to indicate that any man but ourselves was in this country; and we began to feel that we should find nothing that day, and to hope only that we should hear the weird music again at night. But at last our stealthy hunting brought us something for which we were not looking but which we eagerly took—fresh meat.

Pedro was ahead. At the top of a little hill he halted. Below him sounded several sudden grunts, followed by splashing. He threw up his rifle and shot. Heavier splashes sounded. Then all was quiet.

"Ha!" he laughed in a satisfied way, and down the hill he ran, with me close behind.

At the edge of the water lay a fine young capybara, shot behind the shoulder.

"Four of them," he said, pointing at the river, which was full of ripples. "The others went in there."

We made sure that the big web-footed water-hog was dead, and then we made camp on the hillside. With a fine feast like this before us we had no thought of going farther that day.

When the meat was cooked we attacked it with the relish of men who for days had had only *farinha* and dried *pirarucu*. We thought of nothing else but our feast until we were so full that we could eat no more. Then we looked at all the meat that was left and wished we had bigger bellies.

"It was well that we put up our hammocks before we ate, comrade," laughed Pedro. "I do not believe I could do it now. I want a drink of water too, but I am so stuffed that I do not know whether I can go after it— Huh!"

His startled grunt made me look up. And there I saw a thing that made my jaw hang loose.

"*Nossa Senhora!*" muttered Pedro. "What is this? A great *tatu* with plates on his belly as well as on his back? Do you see the thing that I see?"

I did, and I had never seen anything like it. *Senhores*, it was a great man of iron which stood quietly there in the bush and seemed to be watching us. As Pedro had said, it had plates around its belly, and also around its arms and legs and head. It did not even have a face—only slits in the steel where a face ought to be.

The only human thing about it that I saw was its hands—big strong hands curled around the handle of the greatest machete I ever looked upon. It was a huge two-edged weapon, that machete, with cross-pieces slanting outward and downward below the hilt; so big and heavy that a man would have to use both hands to swing it. Later on I learned that its name was "claymore."

The iron man made no move, and I saw that his weapon was not held in a threatening way, but rested with its point on the ground. And then as my first astonishment passed off there came to me the feeling that something was behind me. Looking swiftly around, I found that this was true. At my back stood a big Indian, painted for war.

Beyond him were other Indians, almost hidden in the bush. And as I glanced about us I saw more of them, standing as still as the iron man. We were surrounded.

PEDRO saw them too. We did not make the mistake of snatching at our rides or jumping up. We sat very still and studied them. They looked hard and grim, but still they did not seem hostile.

And though I did not know why they were here, or what the nature of that silent iron-plated *tatu* might be, I do know something of Indians; and when an Indian has not decided whether to be your friend or your enemy the first step toward making him your friend is to give him something good to eat. So, taking care to make no sudden movement, I cut off a chunk of our meat, grinned up at the savage and offered it to him.

With a grunt he took it. We beckoned to his mates, pointing to the capybara and telling them to come and eat. They came, and we found that they numbered more than a dozen.

Without further words we cut more flesh from our water-hog and cooked it—that is, we tried to cook it, but each chunk was grabbed and eaten by a hungry savage before it was more than warm.

When we stopped work for a minute we heard a dry voice over our shoulders.

"Ye might e'en gie me some o' that too, lads," it said.

The iron *armadilho* had come up to us, and now we saw what he was. The slits in the metal had been shoved up on top of his head; and out from under it looked a strong, sad, gray-bearded face with a long nose and deep eyes colored like steel—the face of a white man. His voice sounded tired, and he looked tired, and his eyes held no smile. Yet they were kindly eyes, and we knew that he and all his wild gang were now our friends.

"Welcome, friend *tatu*," said Pedro. "We did not know whether you were a living man or not. Your men have left little meat, but there is enough for a taste."

He made no answer, but stood silent until the flesh we cut for him was well cooked. Then he ate it slowly. When it was gone he asked—

"Wha are ye, and what will ye be doin' here?"

"We are Pedro and Lourenço, of the *seringal* of Coronel Nunes, east of the Javary," my comrade told him. "And we are here because we are a pair of wandering fools who have heard strange music in the night and would know what makes it. Have you too heard that music, father?"

The steely eyes seemed to soften a little as they looked into the handsome, boyish face of my partner.

"Feyther?" he repeated. "I am not your feyther, laddie. Yet, gin ye had gray een instead o' brown, and brown hair instead o' black, ye might be ma ain braw Jamie."

He sighed, as if at a memory.

"So the skirl o' the pipes brought ye here—as the crack o' your goon brought me here. Gin ye would be seein' the thing that will be makin' the strange music, come wi' me. Aiblins it will be soundin' tonight for the last time; for we are on the trail o' a pack o' murderin' hounds, and hope soon to close wi' them."

He turned away and went into the bush. The big savage who had stood behind me, and who seemed to be a chief, grunted something to the others and followed him.

All but one of the Indians went with their leader. That one stood waiting while we took down our hammocks and prepared to go. When we were ready he too faded into the jungle, and we trailed after him grunting under the weight of our packs and wishing we had not eaten so much.

The iron *armadilho* and the warriors with him had disappeared. The light was very dim, and there was no path. But the wild man ahead of us slipped on through the bush as only a wild man can, never hesitating or looking around, and walking at a rate that made us pant.

After a time, though we saw no fire, we smlleed smoke creeping along in the heavy air. Soon after that we passed two silent Indians who seemed to have been waiting for us and who now followed us.

And before long we came out into a clear space under a great *matamata* tree, where we found a tent with a small, smoky fire before it. Our guide grunted, pointed, then turned aside and was gone.

We knew of course that the tent was that of the iron *tatu*. We dropped our packs and stood where we were, waiting for that strange man to come out.

The two wild men who had followed us also stopped, standing beside us watchfully, each gripping in his right fist the handle of a big war-club. We saw that they had not been among those who ate of our meat, but were men who had stayed here and were wary of us.

Wondering how large this band of fighters was, and who were the "murderin' hounds" they hunted, we leaned on our rifles and watched that little cloth house under the tree.

* * *

SO SUDDENLY that we jumped, out from that tent came a deep drone and queer high-pitched squeaky sounds. Quickly they grew louder and became music—the music we had heard down the river.

And then in the doorway we saw the white man. He wore no iron plates around him now, and though he was big-boned and broad-shouldered he seemed too old a man to be leading a savage tribe on a jungle trail of death. But this thought quickly faded out of our minds as we watched what he was doing and listened to the barbaric sounds he made.

Under one arm he held a leather bag, and into this he blew through a sort of pipe. Three other pipes stuck out from the bag, two of them pointing upward over his shoulder while the third was in his hands.

On this third pipe his fingers moved, and with their movement the shrill tones changed from one note to another. The deep drone, though, did not change. Hoarse and menacing, it sounded steadily on while the other tones rose and fell.

And as we listened there crept over us again that feeling of sadness which the music of these pipes had brought to us before; and we saw that the face of the piper too was sad, and that he was looking at something far away. The music seemed a wail of sorrow for some one who was dead; and somehow my thoughts went back to a time when I lost one who was very dear to me, and my sight became blurred.

Then this passed off, and instead came a feeling that this death must be avenged. It grew stronger, this thirst for vengeance, until I saw myself trailing an enemy through the jungle, driven by a power that told me I must find him and kill, kill, kill!

And then I came up with my foe, and we fought a bitter fight, and I slew him. And I stood on his body and yelled in victory——

With a dying drone the wild music stopped. I blinked, and realized where I was.

Beside me the Indian with the war-club was breathing hard, and the one at the side of Pedro had a glare in his eyes. And all about us were warriors who had come in from the bush and now ringed around the clear space—more men than we had seen, and all bearing in their faces that fierce desire to kill.

"A bit mair, lads, and ye would be flyin' at one another's throats," said the piper soberly. "The pipes are wild, and they will be rousin' wild thoughts in the hearts of fightin' men. Aweel, an auld man must console himsel'. Come noo and sit by me, where ye will be safe."

He stepped back into the tent and came out again without his music-bag. We lifted our packs and carried them to the fire, where we dropped them. Then we got out our rubber-covered tobacco-bags and offered him tobacco. He took it, packed it into a pipe and waited until we had rolled our cigarets. And then as the day died we squatted beside the fire and smoked and talked.

At first we did the talking, telling him of ourselves, our work and our wanderings which had brought us into his camp. Then, feeling that now we had the right to ask, we inquired what he did here with his wild men and his iron clothes. And slowly, stopping at times to stare into the fire, he told us.

He was of an island of mountains, far away across the ocean, called Scotland, where the people were like the English but yet were not English. He had left this island many years ago and come into South America to trade with Indians.

Then he had married a lady of Peru and settled in Iquitos, where a son was born to them. This son was his only child, for when the boy was born the mother died. And as the boy grew he taught him all he could, and then he sailed back across the seas with him to Scotland, where he put him in school and tried to content himself with the life of a city man.

But this, he found, he could not do. Though he had hungered for years to return to his own mountains, now that he was there he soon grew restless and dissatisfied. It seemed a cold country where life was slow, and he felt the call of the wild jungle and of the Peruvian town where his wife lay buried.

He learned too that he could make little money in his own land; and though he had enough to keep himself and his boy in comfort he was neither rich enough nor lazy enough to remain idle. So at length he left his son in the care of relatives and came sailing back to the head-waters of the Amazon, where he became again a trader with Indians.

The boy, Jamie, grew into a strong man. War came—the great war in Europe—and he joined the soldiers of Scotland and fought the Germans. Then one night while he and his mates slept in a hole down in the ground the enemy sent deadly gas creeping across from their trenches, and it hurt his lungs so that he nearly died.

He was sent back to the mountains of Scotland, and there he grew strong again. But before he was well enough to go back to the battle-fields the war ended.

And then, though he had grown up in Scotland, he felt the same call that had come to his father—the call to go back to the Amazon. So he went.

As I have said, he was a fighting man. The blood in his veins was fighting blood. For hundreds of years before him his family had been big fighting men of the highlands.

And there had been a time, the old man told us, when guns and cannon were not much used in war, and the fighting was mostly with arrows and axes and swords. In those days, he said, the richer men wore great suits of steel to protect themselves while they killed their enemies.

And in the family of Jamie, handed down through the years and kept in good condition by one generation after another, was one of these suits of steel armor and a great sword with which some long-dead ancestor had fought. And now the young soldier Jamie brought this armor across the ocean with him, and when he reached Iquitos he used to put it on sometimes and show his father how well it fitted him, and how he could swing the huge two-handed sword.

Of course the sword and the armor were kept only as family treasures in the home of these two in Iquitos, for they never thought of making any real use of them. When the father and son went on trading-trips they wore only the clothing of white men in the jungle, relying for safety on their guns and the friendly feeling of the wild men toward the old man, who had dealt with them for years.

They had no trouble with any of the Indians, for the trader knew well who were his friends and who were not, and he kept away from those who were hostile toward white men. So all went well until Jamie became too daring.

NOW you may have heard, *senhores*, that around the river Maranon, which flows for many miles northward in Peru and then swings eastward, forming one of the important heads of the Amazon, there is a fierce tribe of brutal savages who cut off the heads of men and shrink them to a size much smaller. They hate every one; they are always fighting with the other tribes around them and taking their heads; and their hatred of white men is especially strong, so that no white man can go into their country and come out alive.

But in this country there is said to be much gold; and I have noticed that where gold is there are always white men daring enough to try to get it. And Jamie, who had been through the hell of the Great War and feared nothing, heard of this and determined to go after some of the gold.

He had been told of these murderous savages by his father of course, and warned to keep away from that country of death. He had even seen some of those shrunken heads, which sometimes are captured by other tribes fighting the head-hunters and then are traded by them, so that finally they reach Iquitos.

But he had also met in Iquitos two young men who had more bravery than sense, and who believed they could get gold in the land of the head-shrinkers and escape with it. So, being restless and eager for adventure, Jamie secretly prepared to go with them. And he did go, leaving behind a note telling his father only that he had gone on a "little trading-trip" of his own.

Never suspecting where his boy had gone, the father did not worry about him. He himself went out among his Indian friends.

At length as he was returning to Iquitos he met a band of wild men whom he knew and who now were on their way back to their own village after a raid into the country of the head-hunters. It had only been a small raid, and the invaders had had to retreat quickly because they had found themselves near a big war-party.

But before retreating they had killed several of their enemies and looted a small camp; and in this camp they had found the shrunken heads of three white men. Knowing how highly their foes prized these heads, they brought them back as trophies. And now the leader of the band showed them to the old man of Scotland.

They were the heads of Jamie and his comrades.

The father went back to his empty home in Iquitos. He buried the head of his boy beside the grave of his wife. Then, taking the great sword and the armor which his son had brought him, he returned to the jungle and appealed to the wild men to join him in a war of vengeance against those murderous brutes.

They needed little urging, for every man of them was a bitter enemy of the shrinkers of heads. From chief to chief the trader went, and each in turn took his fighters and went out on the war-trails.

The iron man did not try to make a great army of all these warriors, knowing that they would be hard to manage and would probably fight better under their own chiefs. After learning the plan of each leader he told this plan to the next chief who went out, so that each would know where the others were and could shape his own campaign.

And he himself, though he burned to fight the slayers of his boy, delayed his own attack upon them until he could finish his work of arousing his savage friends to war; for the tribe of the head-hunters was big and powerful, and as many men as possible must be sent against them. When this was done he would go himself and slay as many as he could.

Then when this work was almost complete he learned that a big war-party of those head-hunters had gone far south of the Maranon—too far south for their own safety, for some of the Indians friendly to the Iron *Tatu* had crept in between them and their own land, and had killed a number of them by trailing along and striking them down with arrows whenever the chance came.

Also these trailing Indians had caught a wounded head-hunter and forced from him the information that this was the same gang which had killed the three white men; that they had come southward to find those heads again and to take also the heads of the raiders who had stolen them. But now, finding the country of their enemies more dangerous than they had expected, they had swung off to the east and were trying to return to their own country.

Hearing this, the father at once took the trail. More than a hundred wild men were with him now, he told us, and farther north others were trying to cut in ahead of the retreating head-hunters. The end of the trail, he said, was near at hand, for the *barbaros* would soon be attacked in front and behind.

"'TWAS weel for ye that ye came frae the south," he added. "Had ye been comin' frae the east ye would ha' been meetin' them, and your own heids would noo be danglin' by the hair.

"I counsel ye to gang awa the morn, for the fechtin' wi' yon murderers will be sair, and it isna your affair. Gang back doon the reever, lads, and ye will be reachin' your hame a' richt."

"Do you take us for children to be sent home to our mothers?" demanded Pedro. "We go with you, *Senhor Tatu*, to fight those beasts."

The sad-faced man almost smiled.

"Juist like ma Jamie!" he said. "Hot-heided and fearless—puir bairn! Gin ye will be fechtin' for the auld man, ye will, and there's an end o't. Ye should be braw fechters, wi' your bush experience and rifles and ammuneetion; and twa sic riflemen should pit mony a savage doon."

"Yes," I said; "and why have you not brought your own rifle and many bullets instead of that *armadilho* suit and sword? You could kill many more men with a gun."

But he shook his head.

"Ye're wrang, Lourenço," he disputed.

But why I was wrong he did not say. I did not argue the point, but asked him another question—why, when he was near his enemies, he played that strange music at night instead of keeping quiet.

He had three reasons for this, he explained. First, as he had said before, "an auld man must console himsel';" and I remembered how the pipes had mourned the dead and then followed the enemy to his doom and exulted over the vengeance. Besides this it had great effect on his Indian allies, and kept alive in their hearts the fires of war and hate, and confidence that they would destroy all their foes.

And if those foes heard it, as he hoped they did, it would worry them; for they would not know what made it, and the weird music would carry to them the message that they were being relentlessly tracked through a hostile country by something that would kill them in the end. So they would not rest well at night, and because of this they would not fight so well when overtaken.

Then he rose, knocked out his pipe and looked around him. We arose also, surprized to fine that night had come upon us without our realizing it.

We three seemed to be alone. The tiny fire gave little light, and around us was dense blackness, with nothing to show that more than a hundred fighting men were all about us in the bush.

"Aweel, 'tis time we sleepit," said the iron *tatu*. "I am verra sorry I canna be invitin' ye to share ma tent—it isna big enough, ye ken. But aiblins ye can make shift. Sleep weel the nicht and hae no fear—ye will be far safer here wi' ma rough freends aroond ye than ye would be in your ain camp."

It was on my tongue to tell him that we were not in the habit of having fear, but I left it unsaid; for I saw that he did not think us to be afraid, but that it pleased him to speak in fatherly fashion, as if we were sons of his. We freshened the fire to give more light, cut some stakes, planted them near the tent and slung our hammocks from them. And there with the smoke of the fire creeping around us and keeping insects away, we curled up to sleep.

"Good night, father," smiled Pedro.

"Guid nicht, lads," said the old man softly.

Then we slept.

At dawn we were up. We got out our extra cartridges, put our hammocks on our packs, took down the tent of the old man of Scotland and breakfasted with him. Then he got into his armor.

When this was done the chief of the fighting men came and talked briefly with him, and he explained that we would fight with them against the head-hunters. The chief nodded as if he had known we would do so, and said something to us which we did not understand. I turned to the man in iron.

"If we fight with you we fight under your directions alone," I told him. "We take no orders from an Indian, *senhor*—I have not heard your name."

"Ye may be callin' me Mac," he answered. "And dinna fash yersel.' The chief isna tryin' to give ye orders. He is but tellin' ye what ye juist said—that ye will be stayin' wi' me."

As the chief turned to go, up came four more savages. Two were clubmen. The others carried no weapons, were painted differently and were covered with sweat and breathing hard. They grunted rapidly to the chief, pointing northward. He nodded and spoke to the clubmen, who took the other two away. The chief followed.

"Runners frae anither tribe to the north," explained Mac. "They ha' traveled through the nicht to tell us the heid-hunters are cut off frae their ain land. 'Twill no' be lang-noo before we are on them. I doot ye will hae leetle ammuneetion left, lads, when this day is ower."

WE FILED out into the bush, heading north. Behind us came the chief and his men. As I have told you, the country was hilly and rough, but the jungle was not so thick as that of our own low river-country, and so we passed on easily enough.

The old *armadilho* too, a veteran bush-traveler, stalked along without much effort. I heard him pant, though, when we met stiff climbing. And, thinking it was rather foolish for him to tire himself wearing that heavy weight all the time, I asked him why he did not have it carried for him until he came near the enemy.

He showed me that I was the one who was foolish. For, he said, he had worn that armor day after day so that he might become accustomed to its weight and able to handle himself easily in it. If he waited until he met his foes and then loaded himself down with steel, he asked, what sort of fight would he be able to make?

I felt rather simple then. He said too that it made the Indians with him feel that he was more than an ordinary man and so would surely lead them to victory. After that I asked no more questions.

For hours we tramped on at a steady rate which ate up the distance but did not tire us. At length we halted to eat. But before we tasted the first mouthful we dropped it and sprang up.

The fight had begun.

Out of the north came a low, confused sound that quickly grew louder. It swelled into a dull roar—the deep yells of fighting savages, with now and then the report of some old-fashioned rifle.

"Hear yon goons!" cried Mac. "The rifles o' the wild laddies to the north! The heid-hunters hae no rifles—they will be fechtin' wi' bows and arrows. Ma braw freends are on them!"

And he yelled, *senhores*—a wild, fierce yell of war that must have echoed more than once in past years among the mountains of his own Scotland, a yell as savage as ever came from any Indian throat. And from the warriors around us came a hoarse "Hough!" of joy, and their faces flamed with the lust for killing.

Then came men tearing through the bush—scouts who had been far out ahead. They gasped their news to the chief.

Some of the wildmen, listening, surged northward as if about to start a rush. But the chief barked sharply at them and they stopped. Then he gave other commands, and his warriors shifted about as he ordered.

Several men carrying old Winchesters came up and stood with us—all the riflemen in the company. Bowmen took places behind us. Other men did as they were told, but they were farther back in the bush and I could see little of them.

"We advance in a body and then spread oot," the *armadilho* told us. "Noo come awa, laddies a'—yon is the fechtin'!"

And in a body, as he said, we trotted forward in the wake of the scouts.

We ran silently, making no sound except that caused by our feet and the rustle of our bodies through the leaves. Yet we could have shouted to one another and done no harm; for ahead of us, as we crossed the low hills, the howling, screeching, roaring noise of fight rose ever louder—such a hellish sound of savage hate as I hope never to hear again. We knew the head-shrinkers and their foes were at close grips, and we ran all the faster to come up before the murderers of white men could break through and win.

At length the steel *armadilho* stopped and barked over his shoulder—

"Spread oot!"

With the words he reached upward and pulled the slitted mask down over his face. I stepped to his right, Pedro to his left.

The Indian riflemen went to right and left in turn. Then we slipped forward in a thin line to the place where rose that snarling chorus of battle, which now seemed to be almost under us.

We were on the rim of a valley, not very deep but quite wide, in which the bush seemed scattered and thin. In this valley and on its slopes the battle raged.

Down below, behind such cover as they could get, *barbaros* with great bows shot arrows upward at the thicker bush along the heights. Long blow-guns flicked out from unexpected places, hung an instant, sent their poisoned darts into the air and sank again.

Here and there on the rising ground I caught glimpses of men struggling in death-grapples and rolling down the slope like close-locked fighting jungle beasts. From the top of the hillsides arrows flashed down into the valley-floor where the bowmen of the head-hunters hid. No rifle-shots cracked out now, and I knew the few cartridges of the attacking Indians were gone.

ALL this I saw in far less time than it takes to tell it; and even as I slipped toward a tree and cocked my rifle I thought the head-hunters were fools to let themselves be caught in such a trap.

Then I stumbled over a dead man. A long arrow stuck out from his ribs, and he lay huddled as he had fallen. I kicked him over on his back, and one glance at his brutal face showed me he was one of the shrinkers of heads.

And in a flash I saw how the attacking Indians had herded their enemies into the valley—by harrying their retreating line as the old man had told me, killing their scouts and then slipping away, making them think only a few men were trailing them and at the same time preventing them from learning of the ambush ahead. This dead man under me, shot from the side, was a sample of that sort of work.

A rifle barked near by. I jumped behind my tree, picked a bowman down below and fired. Other shots smashed out and became a ragged chorus of gunfire. A new burst of arrows whizzed out from the jungle around me, shot by the followers of the iron *tatu*.

For an instant the fighting seemed to halt as both the head-hunters and the northern Indians turned toward the sound of our guns. Then a mighty battle-yell broke from our men. Back came an answering yell of welcome from the Indians who had been holding the *barbaros* in that trap. And at once the fighting grew hotter than before.

Then for a time I was too busy pumping lead into those accursed shrinkers of heads to see anything else. I picked them swiftly but carefully, and I did not often have to shoot twice at the same man.

Arrows thudded into my tree and stuck there, quivering, until I dropped to all fours and worked rapidly to another tree which was not so good a mark. I found a dead man there too—one of our own bowmen, killed by an arrow which had struck one eye and gone through the brain.

But it gave me protection enough, that tree, for I did not have to expose myself so much as the dead man had been forced to do with his big bow. And there I shot again until the rifle-barrel burned my hands.

As I stopped a moment to let the gun cool, I realized that only one other rifle was shooting—that of Pedro. He and I were the only riflemen who had any cartridges left.

The arrows too were falling thinly now. Spearmen and clubmen had leaped out and were charging down the slopes to meet their enemies at close quarters. And those enemies, snarling with rage, sprang to meet them.

They arose from places where bullets had not found them and, swinging great clubs or dodging the spear-points and closing with the spearmen, they battled like the human animals they were. They bit and clawed, they choked and stabbed, they struck the foulest blows known to men. If they killed their opponents they came on upward until others struck them down.

One huge, horrible savage came bounding up the slope directly under me, and I snapped a bullet into him barely in time. It was the last shot in my gun, and the last one I ever fired from that rifle; for before I could reload it I lost it.

A scrambling rush and a snarl sounded at my right, and another of those head-shrinkers came leaping at me with a war-club. So sudden was his attack that only chance saved me from death. He tripped over a low, tough vine and fell against a tree.

It halted him only an instant, but that was enough for me. As he shoved himself upright I jumped for him and swung my rifle down on his head with all my power. The blow killed him. Also, it broke my gun.

It broke in two that rifle at the narrow place where the metal joined the wooden stock. The barrel tumbled aside into the bush, leaving me with numbed hands holding the useless butt.

Dropping it, I yanked my machete from my belt and peered around for any other assailant. None came. So I whirled back to the edge and looked down.

Roaring up the valley toward us came a knot of *barbaros* clustered around a hideous brute who seemed a chief. Arrows dropped among them, and three of them fell. Clubbers and spearmen dashed at them and killed or were killed. Still they came on in a grim rush.

Swiftly I wondered whether I had better wait until they came to me or jump down to meet them with my machete—it meant death either way. And while I hung there undecided I found that I need not do either.

They stopped.

They halted all at once, staring at a place beyond me, to my left. They ceased their yelling, too, and stood like men struck breathless. Then out from the bush, slow and terrible, a great steely figure with a dripping red sword came to meet them—the iron *tatu*.

He made no sound, showed no haste. His sure, silent, steady advance spoke doom. It seemed to say:

"I am Death!

"I am red with the blood of your brothers!

"I come to destroy you also!

"Ye are all dead men!

"I am Death!"

And as he walked on toward that chief whose men had slain his son, a silence came down on that death-stained valley. White men and brown, we all stood watching.

The chief and his guard were as still as if turned to stone. Not until the steel *armadilho* was almost upon them did they move. And that move, *senhores*, was backward.

SEVERAL of the chief's men shrank back. Though they stood with weapons lifted their arms seemed paralyzed. They crowded back upon their mates behind.

Then a hoarse snarl broke from the chief himself. Knocking aside the fear-stricken savages before him, he sprang with upraised club at the man of steel.

With that huge club he struck a mighty blow. But as he struck the old man of Scotland took one long step to the side and whirled up his great claymore.

It flashed redly sidewise and down. And the chief, *senhores*, dropped apart.

His head and one shoulder and arm all fell off him in one piece. The rest of his body flopped forward and down.

And as the other *barbaros* stood paralyzed, staring at the thing that had been their leader, the iron man swung his sword once around his head and struck again—a long, sweeping, sidewise blow. The heavy blade sliced off the head of another savage and killed also the man beyond him, cutting his spine at the back of the neck.

Then he yelled—the wild yell of his own Scotland. Yells burst from the head-hunters too—yells of rage and fear. Some attacked him. Others turned and ran.

One of these, with terror stamped on his face, came scrambling up straight at me. I sprang down on him and killed him with my machete. When I looked again toward the iron man I could not see him.

I could see his red claymore though, rising and falling in a knot of struggling savages. And when it fell a man fell with it.

Suddenly the rest gave way and scrambled aside from him. He leaped at them with another sweeping swing and one more body flopped headless on the ground. The others bolted.

Pedro's rifle cracked twice, and two more head-shrinkers dropped.

Arrows and blow-gun darts, fired by *barbaros* hidden beyond the chief's fleeing men, struck the iron *tatu*. But they only splintered on his armor, and he heeded them no more than buzzing insects.

"Came awa, laddies a'—cut them doon!" he roared.

We obeyed. From every side we came bounding down the slopes and threw ourselves on our enemies wherever we found them.

It was close work, and I was too busy keeping myself alive, with only my machete for a weapon, to know much about the other fights around me. I knew, though, that the victory now was ours, and this killing was what I have heard you *senhores* call "mopping up;" for most of the head-hunters now were dead, and the rest were dying as fast as they could be found.

Soon a long shout arose down the valley and came upward, growing as it came. I leaned against a tree, feeling suddenly tired. That shout told me that the murderous band from beyond the Maranon was wiped out.

For a little time I rested. Men of our own Indian force came past, hunting for any enemy who still might live.

They halted and asked by signs whether I was wounded. It was not strange that they thought so, for I had just had a hard struggle with one savage and was splashed with his blood and my own. But I showed them that I was not much hurt, and they nodded and went on.

Before they left though they pointed behind them, and one said something which I did not understand. While I was puzzling about this there came a long call—

"Lourenço-o-o-o!"

It was Pedro's voice, and it came from the place to which the Indians had pointed. I jumped out and ran toward him, fearing he was hurt. He was not, for I met him coming for me; and though he carried marks of battle he showed no weakness nor signs of a real wound. His face though was very sober.

"What is it, comrade?" I asked.

"It is death," he answered. "The iron *tatu* dies."

The reply struck me speechless. That big steel-armored fighter dying? It could not be so!

But I quickly found that it was true. Grasping my arm, Pedro hurried me back with him, and as we went he explained.

"His old armor must be thin," he said. "Some head-hunter shot him in the back with one of those big war-arrows. It struck a weak place and went through. He will go soon, and he is asking for you."

Ahead of us, beside a low clump of bush, I saw the chief standing with a score of his men. And under that bush I found the old man of Scotland. One look showed me that as Pedro had said he was dying.

HE LAY on one side, and out from his back stuck the shaft of a big war-arrow. The slitted mask of steel had been raised from his face, and that face was very pale.

Yet though the sign of death was on it, it was no longer sad. Peace and contentment were there, and as I squatted beside him he smiled.

"I'll be leavin' ye, Lourenço," he said. "I would be thankin' ye before I go. I was fearin' ye micht not come in time. Ye hae been twa guid freends to me. Ye are guid lads to tak' up an auld man's quarrel wi' no hope o' reward."

He coughed and gasped. Then as I bent over the arrow he said quickly—

"No, no; dinna tak' it oot—'twill only mak' it worse."

And I saw that this was so, and did not touch it.

"Braw fechters ye are," he went on after another coughing fit. "Aye, I saw ye pit the heid-shrinkers doon, as I knew ye would be doin'.

" 'Twas half o' the battle won, the sudden belch o' your goons behind they murderers. It pit fear in them—and fear, lads, is a michty weapon. And did ye see the dogs blench when they spied a man o' iron walkin' at them?"

"I did, comrade," I told him. "And I can see now that you were wise in making yourself a man of iron. You knew that the sight of you and the fact that they could not kill you would strike them with fear. And if they had not feared they might have won."

"Aye," he agreed—and coughed again.

Life was going from him fast. He lay very quiet, and for a time he spoke no more. A gray shadow grew on his face.

"I canna see," he whispered at last.

"The nicht comes. Jamie! Jamie, lad—are ye there?"

Weakly he reached a hand upward. And then Pedro did a very kindly thing. He dropped on one knee and grasped that hand and spoke in the words he had heard the old man use.

"Aye, feyther," he said softly. "Here am I. Hold fast, and we will gang oot into the dark together."

Again a smile spread over the old face—a wan, gray smile.

"We gang togither, laddie—but we willna gang into the dark. Ower yon, lad, your mither waits—"

A little quiver ran through him.

Slowly we got up. Gently Pedro loosened the clasp of the old man's hand. After a moment he bent again and drew the steel mask down over the dead face.

"The iron *tatu* shall be buried in his shell of steel," he said huskily. "It shall be his coffin. He and his claymore and his strange bag of music shall lie in the same grave. Where are those pipes of his?"

I did not answer at once, for something seemed to choke me. After a time I said:

"I think they must be back where we were about to eat. We left everything there except our weapons."

So we turned to the chief, around whom most of the warriors now had gathered in silence, and made him understand that we would bury the iron man here, and that we wanted all his belongings brought up, as well as our own. He nodded and gave orders to his men.

Four of them turned and went away. Four more came forward and lifted the dead man. And back across the quiet battleground we went with him, and up the hillside to the place where he had first stood and looked down on the fight below him.

There in a high dry spot where no flooding stream would ever disturb his resting-place we dug a deep grave. Before this was finished the four Indians returned with his tent and bagpipes, bringing with them also our packs; and other Indians, after moving about over the valley-floor and slopes, quietly brought back certain things which at first we did not notice.

We clasped the hands of the old fighter around the hilt of his great sword and laid the bagpipes under the arm which had pressed them in life. And then around him, his armor, his claymore and his pipes, we wrapped the little tent which had sheltered him from the night rains. When this was done we lowered him into the ground.

Then after the grave was filled and covered with creeping vines which would soon form a tough network of protection the Indians came forward with the things which they had brought.

*Senhores*, those things were the heads of the head-shrinkers. Heads which the steel *armadilho* himself had slashed from fighting *barbaros*, heads which these followers of his had chopped from the bodies of their dead foes—they brought these and piled them in a heap above him as a terrible memorial of an old man's vengeance for the murder of his son.

This was their wild idea of natural justice—that the *barbaros* of the north through taking a white man's head should lose their own to mark a white man's grave. And in truth I do not know that a more fitting tribute than this could have been laid on the last bed of the old fighter who had trailed those murderers by day, piped them to doom at night, and brought death to them in the end.

We turned away. We looked at the battle-ground, at the silent Indians, at each other. And Pedro said:

"Comrade, let us go eastward, back to the river where our canoe waits. We have time to leave this valley of death behind us before dark, and in another day or two we should find our dugout. And then it would be well for us to go back home, for we now have only one rifle, few cartridges and not much food."

"You are right," I told him. "I have rambled enough, and we had best return to headquarters."

We lifted our packs, nodded farewell to the Indians, and tramped away eastward.

No, *senhores*, I can tell you nothing of the fighting north of the Maranon when those other tribes roused by the iron *tatu* swept into the country of the shrinkers of heads. Bitter and bloody it must have been but no word of it ever has come to us. I know that the head-shrinkers still live there, however, and that shrunken heads of white and Indian men still come out from their land.

But the band that took the head of Jamie of Scotland will never take another, for I do not believe that one of them escaped. And up on the hillside, with their skulls heaped above him and his hands clasped around the hilt of his claymore, the father of Jamie must sleep well.

# Kings of the Missouri

### by Hugh Pendexter

### A four-part story, part two

*Author of "Red Belts," "Gentlemen of the North," etc.*

***The first part of the story briefly retold in story form.***

BEAVER was king at St. Louis in 1831, and the town was fast becoming a great center of trade for the fur country. For many years the American Fur Company had held almost undisputed sway on the vast reaches of the Missouri which mounted high into the Rockies through the country of the Blackfeet, Sioux and Crow Nations.

But a dangerous rival was beginning to win pelts which were meant for the storehouses of the A. F. C. It was the young Rocky Mountain Fur Company, first organized by Gen. Ashley, and now led by Jim Bridger, discoverer of Great Salt Lake, South Pass, and bearer of incredible tales about a land called "Yellowstone" where boiling water spouted a hundred feet into the air and Indians owned red-paint caverns.

None thrilled more quickly to tales of the Rocky Mountain men than Ralph Lander, a strapping young clerk in the A. F. C.'s store. Had it not been for his love of little Susette Parker, whose man-handling father was the A. F. C. chief in St. Louis, Lander would have chucked his job over night and joined the opposition. For they were men of his own kind, young and fearless, and their policy of invading the Indian country and trapping furs themselves was far more to his liking than the A. F. C.'s prosaic plan of establishing permanent posts where traders could swap rum and calico for beaver.

Lander's chance to break from the A. F. C. came with astonishing swiftness. One morning as he sorted tradegoods he was debating whether to tell Parker of his lover's understanding with Susette, when Phinny, a fellow clerk of unsavory reputation, carried the story to the boss, hoping thereby to discredit still further Lander with the company.

The result followed Phinny's calculations. Parker lost no time in firing Lander, whom he looked upon as common dirt, an *engagé*, and unfit to claim even a glance from his daughter's flashing warm eyes.

"I'll see you don't get a job with any one in St. Louis—nor down-river, less'n it's nigger's work!" roared Parker; and Phinny smiled as he watched them from behind a pile of whisky casks.

In vain Lander tried to meet Susette and tell her of his misfortune. Her father kept her safely indoors. Then Lander turned to one of his few true friends, old "Papa" Clair, an eccentric Frenchman from Louisiana who had taught him the science of knife-play and how to get on in this wild frontier town.

The two visited a water-front drinking-place where Lander hoped to meet Phinny and settle his score. The result surpassed his hopes. He found Phinny lion of the place and boasting of the "yellow cur" he had driven from the A. F. C.'s employ. There followed quickly a blow and challenge for combat. The place of the duel was Bloody Island, where many a famous pioneer had met death in defense of honor.

To Lander's surprize, Bridger, whom he scarcely knew, championed his cause and stood with Papa Clair against a host of A. F. C. men to see that fair play was allowed. The combat was short—pistols at fifteen paces. And when the second shot sounded across the great river Phinny fell mortally wounded.

There was no hope for Lander if he tarried after killing an employee of the A. F. C. Bridger urged him to join the Rocky Mountain expedition about to leave St. Charles, a town near St. Louis. Lander accepted, wrote Susette a parting note in which he asked her to await his return, mounted his mule and bade St. Louis farewell.

St. Charles he found in a turmoil. Prevost, river leader of the Rocky Mountain men, was gathering his host of ruffians in the wet dawn, preparatory to going aboard their keelboat. Then away to the raw, new lands up the Missouri. But before they could leave there must be a battle royal to see who should wear the bully's red belt and "carry the pipe" on the expedition.

"Keelboat style—but no biting, eye-gouging or bone-breaking, and all weapons aside," ordered Prevost.

Gradually the fighting eliminated all except Lander, a huge bruiser called "Porker," and Long Simons, bully of the last trip. The Porker rushed Lander with a grin of exultation but was met by stinging rights and lefts to wind, jaw and throat that left him dazed and roaring. Then casting all caution aside the Porker leaped again at his agile antagonist. Followed a battle that could only end when sheer weight overcame speed and science; and Porker at last won. But there still remained Long Simons—and when the champion finished with Porker there was no fight left in his panting, battered hulk.

"It's brutal," admitted Prevost, "but it settles their private quarrels once for all. After this hour it'll be work for all, with grudges forgotten."

Lander turned from the scene of combat at a sound of pounding hoofs. Papa Clair, whom he thought safe in St. Louis, was galloping down the dusty street toward him, fear and high excitement on his face. At the same time the smoke of a steamboat was seen rising below the bend of the river.

## CHAPTER V

### PINAUD, THE HUNTER

AS PAPA CLAIR rode he kept his head turned to watch the smoke below the bend. Prevost remarked that it "looked like a race with the steamboat, with the mule a winner."

"It's something about me," said Lander uneasily. "Probably about my duel with Phinny."

"Then the boat has something to do with it," said Prevost. "Clair has come hard and fast to beat it out. The A. F. C. may be sending to catch you."

"Can they take me here?" Lander anxiously inquired.

"If they're strong enough. But if they've come to take you it ain't because you fought a duel. Duels are natural as sleep. It's 'cause you wiped out a A. F. C. man who was a friend of old Hurry-Up Parker. Now we'll know."

The last as Papa Clair's mule came to a staggering halt a hundred yards away. Clair was afoot with the quickness of a cat and running toward the curious group.

"My friend," he called out on beholding Lander. "Holy blue! What has happened to you? You have the bruise, the scratch! Your raiment is torn."

"Nothing, nothing, Papa Clair. What brings you here?" replied Lander.

"Imbecile that I am! Armed men are on the boat to get you. We must ride at once."

"How many? I reckon we can stand them off," spoke up Prevost.

"No, no. There must be no trouble between the A. F. C. and the Rocky Mountain Fur Company—at least, not in Missouri. We must go. You must know nothing about us. And we must ride quick!"

"Then you must have a fresh mule, Étienne Clair," said Prevost.

"A thousand thanks for the same, M'sieu Prevost."

"Simons, rush up two mules," was the sharp order.

The champion did as bid but remonstrated:

"No need o' runnin'. If thar's any trouble along o' that boat I reckon we can smooth it down."

"At Lexington, but not here at St. Charles. Put him on the trail for Lexington, Papa. He can follow the river close enough to see when the boat has passed. He can hold back when he reaches Lexington until sure the steamer has gone and the men with it. If the men stay with us to trap him I'll send some one down the trail to warn him. Now be off. She'll be poking her head round the bend in another minute."

With his mind in a whirl Lander took his rifle, mounted the mule and followed Papa Clair up the river, keeping under cover of a fringe of cottonwoods and willows. The two men covered some five or six miles, exchanging scarcely a word. Then Clair pulled up on the edge of a wooded terrace that gave a view of the river and quietly remarked:

"Now to wait for the steamer to go by. *Fumez la pipe*. The men on the boat must stick to the boat as they haven't any horses or mules and Prevost won't lend them any."

"What does it all mean?" demanded Lander.

"It was after I left you, my friend. I did not feel to sleep," Papa Clair began, speaking between puffs as his pipe balked a bit. "I walked down to the levee, thinking that perhaps some of your visitors would be waiting to get their satisfy from me. I heard a man say the *Golden Queen* would start at three o'clock. I found the boat and watched the freight go aboard. Steam was up. They would be leaving soon. Then as I stood behind a pile of barrels armed men passed through the light of the basket-torch. They were not trappers nor traders. I recognized Dillings among them. I knew it meant mischief.

"I stole close to the guards and heard talk. They spoke of you. One said they would be sure to pick you up at St. Charles, that they must get you before you got out of the State. That was enough for me. I went to the Parker house on Pine Street and woke a negro in back and gave him money and your letter; and I told him to give it to m'm'selle early in the morning and to let no one see him. Then I placed my knife at his throat and promised to come back and cut off his head if he failed to do as I told him. He said he would sit up all night to be sure to give it to her early. Then to my room, then a mule, and here we are."

"You've come far enough out of your way, Papa. After the boat passes you must start back," said Lander with a sigh in his voice.

"Name of ——! Go back and leave you to be captured perhaps at Lexington? You slander me!"

"Bridger's men won't let them take me."

"They will have a writing from the court. If Bridger stops them then the A. F. C. will make it warm for his company, perhaps try to take away his license. No, no! We must not let M'sieu Bridger have trouble over it."

"I'd rather have you with me than a thousand mountain men, but it's my trouble."

"I am here, Étienne Clair. I went to my room and brought this." He held up a long heavy package securely wrapped in buckskin. "I have come to stay. Not only to Lexington, eight days away, but to the mountains. By the grace of God I will see what truth there is in the cooking-springs and caves of war-paint. See these!"

He unwrapped the package and disclosed three long scabbards, one of his dearly beloved knives in each. With the one in his boot he had four. He proceed to fasten the three blades to his belt, saying as he did so:

"They are all I had to bring. They would have wept had I left them behind. Had I taken one the other three would have been jealous. Ah, they are very sensitive, these little ones of mine. See how bright the blade shines because it goes to the fountain!"

He pulled a knife and held it up to mirror the sun.

Immensely heartened by his friend's presence Lander did not have the courage to insist on the old man's returning. He had been homesick without knowing what was the matter with him. The girl tugged at his heart and kept his thoughts turned to St. Louis. The mountain men were all strangers and exceedingly rough in their ways. He did not fear physical danger, but the fighting and carousing sickened him.

"I ought not to admit it," he mused. "Yet I was feeling very lonesome until you came."

With a rare smile lighting his quaint, wrinkled face Papa Clair replied:

"It is very good of *M'sieu* to allow. Now to the business. We brought no supplies. Take your rifle and scout the bottoms. I will see if can find M'sieu Rabbit or Madame Turkey."

They hitched their mules and separated, Papa Clair taking only his knives.

On rejoining each other thirty minutes later Lander held up his empty hands and looked his disgust. Papa Clair held up a turkey he had killed with his knife.

Having eaten and saved what was left of the turkey they resumed their flight. Their back trail concerned them none as they knew the men would not attempt to follow them afoot. They progressed leisurely, thinking to hold back until the boat passed them. As it was impracticable to follow the river closely, owing to the high water, they were continually riding across the bends, making their mileage much less than that of the boat. At times they drew back a considerable distance from the river and could not know whether or not the boat had passed in the mean time.

For two days they advanced to glimpse the broad and muddy stream and as often retreated, or were driven back by natural obstacles, without sighting the *Golden Queen*. Lander was convinced the boat was ahead of them. Papa Clair, observing the unusual number of snags and drift in the river, and knowing the boat would not attempt to run after dark, shook his head.

ON THE third day they started late and crossed a deep bend. They approached the river along some low bluffs and were able to draw close to the river. They were out of food and had eaten nothing since the noon before.

As they stood and stared out on the mighty desolation Lander forgot his hunger. It was his first trip up the Missouri. Here was a primitive monster eternally gnawing away at the banks, swallowing acres at a mouthful, writhing back and forth and forever shifting its serpentine course. The implacable waters were dotted thickly with drifting trees, fresh victims to its insatiate hunger, and ancient wreckage discarded in past seasons and now retrieved briefly to serve as a plaything.

Inshore were many deadly snags and sawyers. One of the latter, almost below them, deceived Lander at first into believing it was some aquatic monster. It raised its ragged spear of a trunk under the impulse of the current, then furtively sank from sight. A count of ten and it cautiously appeared, then vanished. Papa Clair smiled and briefly named it.

"——! But it does seem as if it knew what it's about," said Lander.

"They are worse than snags," said Papa. "Take one that saws up and down more slowly and a steamer at the bend will see clear water and have time to get above it before it comes up. Then, *peste!* It rips out the bottom."

Regardless of snags and sawyers the steamboat faced two big problems—food and huge amounts of fuel. It was the need of the latter that nearly led the two fugitives into the hands of the enemy.

From the bluff it was impossible to see the edge of the river at their feet. Thinking to find a turkey or deer they left their mules and slid down the clay banks and came to a thick grove of cottonwoods. They were advancing through this, with never a thought of danger, when a voice profanely bawling out brought them to a halt.

Dropping to the wet ground they crept forward to the edge of the growth and were astounded to behold the *Golden Queen* moored to a wood-yard. Her boilers were dead and no smoke was issuing from her stacks. The mate was loudly haranguing and abusing the men who, busy as ants, were bringing wood aboard. In tow was Prevost's keelboat with two men aboard. Neither Prevost nor any of the mountain men were with the boat so far as the two comrades could discover. Forward on the steamer was a group of heavily armed men who seemed to have no work to do. Papa Clair glared at them and played with a knife.

"There is Dillings," whispered Lander. "See anything of Prevost on board?"

Papa shook his head, murmuring:

"Sent two of his boatmen with the keelboat. He and the men went with the mules by land. Hah, behold! It is Tilton. Bah! The cowards! He did not dare come to your room that night. They won't risk their hides where they think we have a chance to fight back."

Now the mate called a halt and gave rapid orders. Deserting the wood-yard the men swarmed along the shore and began salvaging huge drift logs.

"Wood's just been cut. It's too green," whispered Papa Clair. "The logs burn best. They've been laying up here for hours. If they had had a fire going the smoke would have warned us. As it is we are lucky not to fall into their hands. Wood-yards are easy to get at here; but up-country the Indians hide near them and rush the men sent ashore. More than one scalp has been taken that way."

Lander pressed Clair's arm, but the old man had seen and already was working back into the grove. The cause of his alarm was a tall, rangy figure in fringed buckskin and carrying a long rifle.

"Hunter for the boat," murmured Clair. "The crew are easy to fool, but if he should come back in here he would see our trail. We must go back to the mules at once."

They lost no time in ascending the bluffs, the man in buckskin looming in their inner vision as a possible nemesis.

"He'll go ashore about midnight," continued Papa Clair as they found their mules and moved back a bit. "The steamer will start with the first light and pick up what he kills and hangs in trees along the shore. Steam has made women of the river travelers. But behold, I remember when corn, coffee, pork and beans was good enough for any man three times a day. That was before steam came to the Missouri. And yes, back of those days when bear was easier to get than pork we used bear meat. It wasn't so many years ago that every one used bear oil for lard. Many the long dugout I've seen come down the river with the center bin filled with oil and covered with a skin. Yes, and honey too. Holy blue! But so many bee trees in the Missouri bottoms in those days. Fill the cargo-box full and off to town. M'sieu Boone's boys brought in much honey. No barrels, no casks then. And bear oil would go through a skin bag like water through a broken kettle. Ah, it makes me remember we are hungry, my friend. The tall hunter gives me a thought."

He led his mule farther back from the river, Lander following, impatient to learn if his thought tended to serve the food problem. Clair halted and gravely said:

"It is robbery I would lead you into. But what would you have when hungry and the belt set in an extra notch? One must eat when one starves even if one pays the shot to the devil for dining. May the tall hunter have much luck!" And he crossed himself devoutly.

Lander understood and with boyish zest was eager to play Papa Clair's game of larceny. They retired a quarter of a mile and were lucky enough to stumble upon a turkey which they dressed and broiled over dry twigs.

By the time they had eaten, long pennons of black smoke streamed high above the top of the wooded bluffs and they knew the boat was once more fighting its way against the current. They stalked it until it tied up for the night, then pressed on ahead a mile and secured their mules well back from the shore.

With the first streak of light they were scouting along the grove and were soon rewarded by the crack of a rifle.

"He's bagged something!" exulted Lander.

"May God be good to him in his hunting!" piously muttered Papa Clair. "The devil sent this high water to drown out the game. Turkey does not fill me. I want red meat."

Maneuvering down to the bank Clair struck the hunter's trail and followed it until they came to a small deer hung up in a tree where it could be plainly discovered from the boat. A volume of smoke downstream tarnishing the glory of the morning sun marked the coming of the *Golden Queen*. The two adventurers now heard the hunter's rifle speak again some distance ahead.

The deer was removed from the tree and carried back into the woods and butchered. Loaded with the meat they scrambled up the slope and located their mules. They struck due north for several miles before daring to halt and make camp.

Hastily broiling some steaks they satisfied their enormous appetites and rode west, swinging down toward the river as the sun touched the horizon. They were at the neck of a bend, and cutting across this they beheld the *Golden Queen* working inshore through the many snags.

The voices of the crew and passengers could be plainly heard. Papa Clair pointed out a man on the upper deck and informed:

"It is his work to watch for the game the hunter hangs up on the bank. The hunter has had poor luck, making his kills far apart. When game is plenty he will be back on board by ten o'clock in the morning with the rest of the day for sleep and playing the gentleman. He can not be asked to do any work of any kind. Once I was hunter for a keelboat. But that was far different."

Now the lookout cupped his mouth and bawled out—

"Ducks on th' starboard bow!"

Clair chuckled softly and whispered:

"The tall hunter will be very angry when he goes aboard and does not find the deer. The lookout man will be blamed and that will make him angry. Now we can go back. There is a big bend for us to cut across tomorrow."

That night they ate as only a borderer can eat after being half-starved for days. Lander was amazed at the portions of meat he devoured. At dawn they were on their way, keeping wide of the river until Papa Clair decided they were near the bend, when they bore south again. Papa Clair should have sensed the possibility of others choosing to walk across the bend, even as he and Lander were doing. Apparently he did not give the matter a thought, and Lander was too green to the country to think of it.

The two fared pleasantly, having eating heartily, with Papa in a boy's mood and regaling his companion with many stories of the upper country. It was seldom he mentioned those periods of his life spent on the lower Mississippi, in and around New Orleans.

"Call this a bend," he scoffed. "Wait till you go round the Great Bend, thirty miles by boat and only a mile and a half across by land. Before the steamboat it was hard for river men. Last year when Jedediah Smith took some Rocky Mountain Fur men with loaded wagons to the Rockies by way of the Platte and Sweetwater he showed what one could do by land travel. M'sieu Bridger says he could have taken the wagons over the mountains by South Pass with no trouble."

"Wish I'd gone with that outfit. I'd know something about the mountains by this time," lamented Lander.

"It's not too late to learn if the A. F. C. don't get you before you get started," Papa comforted. "All their posts can be reached by water and they have no love for land travel. When M'sieu Ashley plunged into the mountains and set his men to trapping instead of using the Indians he made the A. F. C. open its eyes and grow very angry. The A. F. C. has more influence among the Indians than the government's Indian Department. There's no law beyond Fort Leavenworth except what you make and enforce yourself. To build posts in opposition is sorry business for the independent trader. He is undersold and discouraged and tricked in a hundred ways. The Indians do not believe the new man can last for more than a season and so they stick to the A. F. C."

"Stick so long as the liquor holds out," laughed Lander. "Fort Union was always sending word by express that they must have liquor."

"Ah but those A. F. C. Such men! When it came hard to smuggle liquor they built a big distillery inside the fort. They got corn from the Mandans and the Minnetarees and turned out all they needed. There was Pinaud who killed Blair at Cabanne's Post. Both were hunters for the post. Behold, it was cold-blooded murder. Pinaud is taken to St. Louis and put on trial for his life. Every one on the river knew he would be hung. Every one said: 'Eh? A rascal. May the devil take him!' And he was acquitted! No witnesses came down the river to tell the truth against him. The A. F. C. was willing he should be hung, but to place a noose around his neck would show the company was violating the law by selling liquor at its posts. So Pinaud, the murderer, is free and back up on the river somewhere, believing he can kill any one and not be punished. I have often wished I could have him within good throwing distance."

A rifle barked behind them and Lander's mule bolted. The shot hardly sounded before Papa Clair was off his mule and crouching behind some wild rose bushes.

"Get down! Get down! Do you want to see the mountains, my friend?" he softly called out.

Lander fell off his mule and crawled behind a walnut tree, his animal trotting away to find its mate in Clair's hiding place. And this was the danger Clair should have anticipated when he started to travel across the bend.

Clair beckoned for Lander to crawl to him. As Lander obeyed he instructed:

"Take the mules and lead them back from the river. Name of a pig! Why did I forget there were others who were hungry to walk on the land!"

"If there is to be any fighting—" Lander began.

"*Non! non!* I must see how many of the murderers are behind us. It may be it is some straggler."

Securing the mules Lander bent half double and slowly worked them back from the bend. Papa pulled his ragged hat firmly over his white hair and began scouting his back trail. Moving with exquisite cunning he reached the spot where he believed the assassin must have stood in firing the shot. He circled about this point, moving with the ease of a shadow. He heard nothing to arouse his suspicions, but when half way round the circle he came upon signs which told him one man had recently passed there. Now a faint "*hulloo*" came down the wind, indicating the shot had been heard.

Taking the unknown's trail Clair followed it. He believed that some of those who had gone ahead would be returning soon to investigate the shot.

He trailed the would-be slayer across the circle and into his own trail. To his trained eye it was obvious the man ahead was no woodsman, for his signs were many and exhibited much awkwardness.

Coming to some bull-berry bushes which stood twelve feet high and were thick with thorns Papa noted a thread caught on a thorn. He examined it carefully and pronounced it to be homespun. The man had crowded too close to the ticklish cover. Why? Clair crept around the bushes and to his horror caught a glimpse of Lander making up the bush-grown slope. He vanished almost as soon as seen, but there were other open spots ahead of him.

With a click of the teeth that denoted dismay Papa Clair shifted his gaze to the foreground, desperately seeking the snake before he could strike. He swept his eyes in a semi-circle and repeated before he made out the homespun-clad figure blending in with the bare, dull branches of the bush growth. The man was kneeling and his long rifle was bearing on the slope. As Papa Clair raised his rifle Lander came into view. The assassin steadied his gun, but Clair's was the only shot fired. Lander turned and stared down into the lowlands.

Clair raced to the silent figure, gave it one glance, and then tore up the rise to Lander.

"Hat of the devil!" panted the old man, seizing the mules and fairly dragging the surprized young man into the bushes.

"Are they coming?" gasped Lander.

"If not it is not because *M'sieu* has not invited them," groaned Papa. "You ride in the sunlight, in open places, where all the world can see you. At night you should carry a flaming torch in each hand and sing. Then you would throw the assassins off the trail. *Messieurs*, the murderers, must be puzzled to know where you are."

"I must be very green," Lander sheepishly confessed. "I didn't think I could be seen. Who fired the shot?"

"I, Étienne Clair. Dillings was stalking you as he would a blind bull."

"Of course you—" faltered Lander.

"I always do. Had I had time I should have used the knife. Come—the others will be hurrying here like turkey-buzzards after meat."

They turned north almost at right angles with the river and had barely lost themselves in a region of scrub when a hoarse howl at the neck of the bend advertised the discovery of Dillings' body. The two mules left an open trail, and Papa Clair dismounted and scouted ahead. Soon he whistled softly and Lander joined him on a stretch of stony ground that extended east and west. Clair mounted and took time to breathe deeply.

"They are not woodsmen, my friend. They are but tavern loungers. Yet behold, a man without eyes could follow our trail. So it is very good we reached this rough strip. We will follow it west and strike into the bull-berry bushes."

"Thanks to you we got out of that mess nicely," shivered Lander.

"Not yet out of it. They know we are here. They heard Dillings shoot. They know he wouldn't fire unless he saw something to shoot at. They heard my shot. They find him dead. We have lost a move. Now we will hold back and be sure the boat has gone on ahead even if we arrive at Lexington after the outfit has started."

"And be hunted by Tilton's gang all the way to Lexington," reminded Lander. "They'll quit the boat and chase us afoot."

"Bah! they are nothing. If only——"

"Go on," urged Lander.

"If only they do not send the tall hunter after us," mused Clair. "He is used to following trails and reading signs. When he hears of Dillings' death he will know we took the deer. He will not get his satisfy till he bags us. But God wills."

They traveled hard so long as a shred of light remained, purposing to add as much distance as possible after darkness should blot out their trail from the hunter's knowing eyes. Then they would keep to cover until satisfied the *Golden Queen* was far up the river. They knew the boat would not wait for any scheme of vengeance to be worked out. Lander surmised his old friend was apprehensive. He was sure of it when the old man insisted they build no fire but eat what meat they already had cooked.

"Tall and thin. Thin as a buffalo cow in early Spring," he mumbled as he tore at his food. Then to Lander: "You saw the hunter. How did he walk?"

"I didn't notice, beyond his trick of swinging his right leg sideways a bit. Maybe he didn't, but that's the way it looked."

"Good! You will make a mountain man yet—if you live. It all came to me a few minutes ago. I saw it and did not think about it till now. Now something inside of my head gave me a jerk and said for me to remember how he swung his leg. There could be no other."

"Meaning the hunter?" puzzled Lander.

"Pinaud, the hunter. The man who murdered Blair, and who would have been hung if the A. F. C. had not been trading whisky to the Indians. He's as deadly as a rattlesnake, a killer by nature. He is very worthy of one's best attention. It is to be regretted we must take the mules along."

Lander found his appetite diminishing. Pinaud, the hunter, was a vastly different proposition from Tilton and his blundering roughs. Lander suggested they stand watch but Papa shook his head, reminding that even a Pinaud could not follow a trail through the darkness.

"Then he must have sleep. In the morning he will seek us. The boat can not wait for him to hunt us and the boat must have fresh meat. He will try to add us to his bag as he goes along."

THEY were not disturbed that night, and they entered upon the sixth day of their journey with considerable confidence. The mules were a nuisance, but it was out of the question to consider leaving them behind when Bridger depended upon them for the overland trip. They avoided the skyline when in the open and toward midday saw smoke above the trees. Something had delayed the boat, and instead of being behind they were ahead of it.

"We will wait for it to pass," mumbled Papa. "I will find some dry stuff which will not smoke and we will risk a fire. You shall broil some meat while I look about."

Lander stuck some green willow wands into the ground so that the meat-laden tips inclined over the small, smokeless blaze, and then settled himself to wait for Papa Clair's return. He sensed no danger as he sat there, hands resting on his knees. Pinaud, the hunter, was the last person in his thoughts for the excellent reason that Miss Susette was there, a vision that excluded all else. Then Pinaud, the hunter, suddenly stood before him, a savage grin on his thin, dark face as he pointed his rifle and kicked Lander's gun to one side.

Lander had no time to betray the surprize he felt. He curiously wondered why the man did not shoot.

"Where is your mate?" softly asked Pinaud, rolling his eyes to search the surrounding cover.

Then Lander surmised his life would be spared so long as the shot would serve to bring Papa Clair to the scene. This hope was shattered as Pinaud's prowling eyes took in the rifle he had kicked aside. Provided with an extra gun, the very thing he had refrained from doing—discharging his rifle—became the strategetic thing to do. He could kill Lander, then wait behind a bush for Clair to come up and catch the bullet from the second weapon. As Clair might return at any moment he must either shoot or retreat at once.

"Where is your mate?" he repeated.

"Looking for you."

"You mean he knows who I am?"

"Pinaud, the hunter. We saw you on the boat several days ago. We've seen you every day since."

Pinaud frowned and darted his sharp gaze from side to side.

"You found a deer. One I shot for the boat. You took it," he ominously accused.

Lander nodded toward the broiling venison.

"Who is the other man?" hissed Pinaud.

"Papa Clair, of New Orleans and St. Louis."

Had a rattlesnake sounded his warning between the hunter's moccasins the effect could not have been more pronounced. He leaped to one side and snatched his gaze from Lander long enough to reconnoiter in every direction, while he tilted his head and with his supernormal hearing sought to catch some sound of Clair returning.

"—— him," he softly whispered. "Wanted me hung in St. Louis for killing a dog. But they didn't dare hang Pinaud, the hunter."

Lander held his lazy position, his hands clasping his knees, his right hand over the haft of the knife inside the bootleg, his attention concentrated on the man who had come to kill him.

"How far was he going?" snarled Pinaud, again betraying uneasiness.

"To the boat."

"You lie! I'm going to shoot you."

"Go ahead. Clair will get you before you can reload."

"I'll have your gun for him."

"You'll need to load it first."

Pinaud stirred the long piece with his foot but did not dare to risk any examination. Suddenly he began smiling.

"It's a good joke on me," he explained. "I've hunted and shot game so long I forgot I do not have to use my rifle on you." And he grinned ferociously as he observed Lander's empty belt. "Death without any noise. Then I camp by your body and shoot old Clair, the meddler, when he comes back. Yes, that is very good. Strange game I'll hang up for the boat to take off. And a good price I'll get from Hurry-Up Parker."

He approached, walking on his toes and crouching ready for a spring. Lander, as if hypnotized by fear, did not stir. When within ten feet of Lander the hunter snatched out his long butcher-knife, dropped his rifle and sprang on his victim. He was in mid-air when Lander's right hand flashed out Papa Clair's gift knife.

Pinaud's moccasins struck the ground only for him to leap back to recover his discarded rifle. Lander jumped after him and gave him no time to snatch up the weapon. To add to the drama of the scene a low whistle sounded near by. Lander answered it. Now Pinaud knew the trap he had set had caught himself unless he could make his escape with the next sixty seconds. He commenced desperate knife play, but his heart wilted as he found his blade turned aside with a precision and firmness he had never encountered before.

The whistle was repeated. With a yelp of dismay Pinaud kicked at Lander's knee and thrust. There was a slither of steel against steel as the two blades crossed and locked, a cunning twist, and Pinaud fell to the ground, stabbed through the heart.

It was thus that Papa Clair found them. Pinaud's face was composed and serene. Lander's visage was wild and staring, and he caught his breath hysterically as he glared at the dead man. He was partly aroused by Papa Clair's cheery words:

"You've made it much simpler, my friend. We can now ride to Lexington without any fears of being overtaken by surprize. But there is one job we must first bother to do." And he moved toward the dead man.

"I can't touch it!" shuddered Lander.

"My mule and I haven't any such nice feelings," chuckled the old man. "Don't feel put out because you wouldn't let a low-down murderer add you to his list of victims. His death is much to your credit."

Despite his frail physique he lifted the dead man and threw him across the mule and turned away.

"Wait," hoarsely cried Lander. "If you want to hide it, why not leave it here—under rocks? We must shift our camp anyway."

"Hide it!" exclaimed Papa Clair. "What foolishness. I'm going to hitch it to a tree so the look-out on the boat can see it and call out, 'Dead man on the starboard bow.' "

## CHAPTER VI

### "FIVE WALKS"

JIM BRIDGER walked over to a small tent back of the cook-tent, pushed aside the flaps and said:

"You can come out now. Boat's gone."

The tent was seemingly filled with supplies. A barrel, empty, moved aside and from a little pen within the barricade emerged Lander and Papa Clair.

"Where's Tilton?" asked Papa.

"He and his men have started down the river in two twenty-foot dugouts. Had all I could do to keep the boys from mounting 'em. At that Long Simons heaved Tilton into the river. We shall start as soon as the keelboat is under way."

Greeted by friendly grins and much coarse humor Lander and his old friend walked to the river bank, where some thirty men were ready to start the keelboat on its long trip. Étienne Prevost was to go as master, or "patron," and as the position included the responsibilities of steersman he was now standing on top of the long cargo box with his men grouped in the bow. For the first of the trip there would be no cordeling, as several bars were to be crossed at this stretch of the river and poles could be used. Prevost waved his hand to the two new recruits and called out:

"Change your minds. Leave the mule outfit and go with me, Étienne Clair and young man. I have been sick from laughing ever since the cap'n of the *Golden Queen* told me how the sentry bawled out 'Deer on the starboard bow,' and they sent off the skiff to find that —— rascal of a Pinaud hanging from a tree. There is room for you two if you will come."

"You make me very happy with your kind words, Étienne Prevost, but I will have none of the river," replied Papa Clair.

"An' you'll git me mad, Prevost, if you try to steal my men. I need 'em," warned Bridger.

Prevost smiled and called to his crew. The men separated into two groups, each man picking up a long pole with a knob on the end. Men on the bank pushed the long craft off until its nose caught the current.

"*À bas les perches!*" roared Prevost, grasping the long tiller, although he would not be called upon to steer the boat so long as the polemen propelled it.

Each man brought the knob of the pole into the hollow of his shoulder and thrust the tip over the side until it found bottom. Then a St. Louis creole started a song; the men ashore, and those on board not busily engaged, began discharging their guns. The two groups of polemen became two lines, one on each side of the boat.

Along each side of the boat extended the *passe avant*, or narrow runway, strongly cleated to afford a grip for the men's feet. Surging against their poles and treading on the cleats with every ounce of leg-strength the men began to force the boat from beneath their feet. To those ashore it looked as though they were walking down the runways.

As the boat began to respond to the pressure the polemen leaned so far forward as to seize the cleats with their free hands, presenting the grotesque spectacle of walking on all fours. Under such an impetus the boat conquered the muddy current, and as the driving force was equally divided held a straight course, the steersman holding the tiller loosely.

Another volley, supplemented with much shouting, rang out from the bank, and Prevost roared his second order—

"*Levez les perches!*"

Up came the poles, only to drop overboard as the first order was repeated; and again the two lines of men buckled down to it with their shoulders against the knobs and their feet pushing the cleats forward. To Lander the uninitiated it was a stirring sight, not so much because of its novelty as for the romance and adventure it suggested. The men must carry the long towline along shores almost impassible. Whether on the move or tied up for the night there would be much danger from the Indians, especially from the Aricaras. It was destined that some of the light-hearted company would never return.

"Enough powder's been wasted, boys," called out Bridger. "Give 'em cheers and make ready to start. Lander, you know goods. Come and help me get out the equipments."

Lander was soon busy handing out one pair of three-point blankets and powder and ball to each man. Finishing this task he joined Papa Clair and Bridger in assigning the mules. Each man had two, one to ride and one to lead as a pack animal. Then followed the apportionment of goods for each mule, consisting of beaver traps, guns, powder, lead, blankets, liquor in curious flat casks, and clothing. The supplies of bacon and hardtack, and several hundred pounds of corn meal, went with the commissary department, which also had charge of a score of sheep. The last were to furnish meat until the company struck the buffalo country. In addition to Bridger and Papa Clair there were forty-five men in the company.

The scene became very animated when the mules rebelled, some breaking loose and running away, others rolling and scattering their loads. Each man was responsible for his two animals and it was some time before rebels were run down and brought back.

The word to march finally was given. The course was originally a buffalo trail, then an Indian trail, and now the mountain man's recognized road. A few years later it would be known as the Oregon Trail and by the plains tribes as "The Great Medicine Road." For two days it followed the Santa Fé Trail, then swung aside to the northwest and after crossing Wakarusa Creek held on for thirty miles to the Kansas.

After a few days of travel the mules became accustomed, if not reconciled, to their burdens and Bridger proceeded to instil a little military discipline. He divided the company into four divisions of nine guards each and named nine officers. Every third day, as soon as camp was made and the mules had been picketed in the middle of the encampment, an officer posted the guards. Each twenty minutes thereafter the officer would call out, "All's well," and each guard in turn was expected to answer. When a man was found asleep at his post he was ordered to give up his gun in Bridger's tent, submit to a fine, usually five dollars, and be sentenced to "three walks;" that is to travel afoot for three days. Because of the growing danger from prowling Indians the guards were not permitted to move from their posts, and this rule would have made the struggle against sleep a hard one had they been required to remain on duty longer than the scheduled two and a half hours.

Lander found himself in Porker's division and he fancied the man's eyes had a cruel glint as they rested on him. He disliked the man intensely and wished most heartily he had been assigned to Long Simons' squad. However, he turned to his strange duties with a will, remembering it was Bridger and not Porker who was his boss. And there was much satisfaction in witnessing the esteem in which Bridger held Papa Clair. Papa was not required to act as captain of the guard, as the nine leaders easily looked after the four divisions.

FROM the start there was much about the adventure which Lander enjoyed immensely. The wildness and freedom of it all was a magnificent revelation to one who for two years had been cooped up in a store. A few minor details were irritating. He had no coffee nor sugar. The interminable bacon was occasionally varied with a piece of mutton, but mutton soon palled on his appetite. His companions encouraged him to hope for better things by repeatedly dwelling on the sumptuous feasts that would follow their first meeting with the buffalo.

All went well with Lander until after they had crossed the Big Blue, fording it near the mouth of the Little Blue. He had ceased to be suspicious of Porker's intentions.

Then came the night when his division stood the first watch.

Porker stationed his men as usual. Lander's pack mule had been possessed of the devil that day, bolting twice over the back trail and losing his load by rolling. No sooner had Lander repacked and secured the load, with his mates a long line of dots on the edge of the plain, than his riding mule viciously leaped sidewise and threw his rider in a patch of prickly pears. Exhausted by his extra exertions and thoroughly disgusted with the prickly pear Lander made camp in a disgruntled frame of mind and dog-tired when assigned to his post.

Those not on duty were smoking and singing and telling stories or grinning secretly as they listened to Bridger's enthusiastic description of the wonders of the Yellowstone country. Bridger picked Papa Clair for his audience as he had not told him the stories before. Papa was polite from his moccasins to his snowy thatch and endeavored to smother any signs of incredulity. Yet the best he could do he could not refrain at times from emitting a low:

"Name of ——! Holy blue! Caves of war-paint! Cascades of boiling water! A basin filled with scalding water springs which spout high to the heavens! Forests turned to stone! Believe? *Mon Dieu!* Of course. *M'sieu* says it. It is enough. It is so. But it can not be any country on the surface of the globe. M'sieu must have gone through a hole and found hell!"

The shouts of laughter greeting such outbursts increased Lander's hunger for companionship. Then he discovered he was so sleepy that only by some miracle could he hope to keep awake. He would be helpless unless he walked about. He fought the minutes standing erect and found himself swaying on his feet. He dared not sit down.

As it grew darker and the camp quieted and there was no one to keep tabs on him he took to trotting round his post in a small circle and found the action did much to keep him up. Every twenty minutes Porker's voice bawled the call, and as often the men repeated it, the answer rippling in a circle about the camp.

Six times the call came and was answered, and Lander ceased his nervous pacing back and forth and became confident he could fight the remaining thirty minutes. There was no life about the camp except as the ghostly forms of gray wolves drifted near to investigate. Never had half an hour dragged out to such a miserable length as this. But at last came the call, and another ten minutes would see the guards free to seek their blankets.

The ten minutes passed and the relief came on with no one coming to relieve Lander. He could not understand how a mistake could have been made. He did not dare to leave his post to learn the reason; nor did he fancy yelling for the captain to come to him, thereby perhaps arousing the whole camp. Had he been sure the captain was Long Simons he would have risked finding him and explaining.

For the life of him it did not seem that he could endure another twenty minutes, and yet he was determined to hold on for that period. After the new captain called his "all's well," Lander would notice how many men answered. If nine replied besides himself it would show his relief had been posted apart from him. Instead of revealing the captain's error he would steal back to his blankets, soothed with knowing he had acted generously.

By a superhuman effort he kept his eyes open, and at last a voice called out the signal. It was not Long Simons' voice. One, two, three—nine men in all, including

Lander, answered. The detail had lacked a man, and he had been held over without being warned of the necessity.

Now ire drove sleep from his mind. It seemed to be the most serious affront that could be put upon him. He tried to recall the captain's voice and identify it. He decided not to answer the next twenty-minute call. The captain would come out to see if he were asleep and he would demand an explanation and ask to be released.

Because of his increasing anger the time passed quickly.

"All's well!" called the captain, his voice sounding much nearer than it did on the first call.

The reply was made by three men, skipped Lander, and after a few moments hesitation was taken up by the fifth guard. As he had expected Lander soon heard the soft steps of some one approaching and made out a vague figure in the starlight.

"Halt!" he snapped.

"That ye, Lander?"

"I should say so. Who are you? Sounds like Rummy."

"Rummy's right," answered the captain, swaggering forward. "Why didn't ye answer my call?"

"Because I've stood one watch and am tired. I wasn't relieved. Get a man here so I can turn in."

"Like ——! Ye'll have to stick. I'm a man shy. One of my men was kicked by a mule. An' I want to know th' real reason why ye didn't answer when ye heard me hoot. Orders says ye must."

"I've told you. Keep the post yourself. I'm going to turn in." And shouldering his rifle Lander stalked toward the camp.

"Say, ye danged greenhorn, come back here on th' jump. Sleepin' on yer post——"

"You're a liar!"

"An' darin' to tell me to stand yer watch! I'll——"

"You go plump to ——!" snarled Lander, resuming his way.

He believed he had been in his blankets only a minute when he was aroused by a moccasin stirring his ribs. He blinked and sat up, then leaped to his feet inarticulate from wrath. Porker stood there, glaring at him evilly.

"So ye dis'beyed orders an' quit yer post in th' Injun country, ye runt," accused Porker. "I'll make a zample of ye."

"You put up that job with Rummy. Played me for two watches, you overgrown jackass."

With a deep-throated growl Porker drew back a foot and Lander leaped aside to escape a kick.

"I'll l'arn ye to dis'bey orders an' give me any back talk," roared Porker, rushing him.

Lander dropped his hand to his boot and pulled his knife, informing:

"I've fought your style once. Now you'll fight mine."

Nothing loath, Porker whipped out his butcher-knife and made a murderous jab. To his amazement he felt Lander's knife against his, and the steel seemed to have fingers, for the butcher knife was sent high in the air.

"Pick it up and come back here," snarled Lander.

"By the Lord Harry! Fighting with weapons in my camp!" thundered Bridger, running between the two.

Both began explaining at once, Porker black with fury at having been disarmed. Bridger silenced them and told Porker to tell his story. Porker did so, making out a very serious case against Lander.

Bridger turned to Lander after Porker had finished and nodded for him to present his defense. Lander quickly narrated his experience. Bridger wheeled on the bully and demanded—

"You put him in to take the place of one of Rummy's men?"

"Had to, boss. One man shy, kicked by a mule."

"Why didn't you explain to him?"

"Didn't 'low there was any call to. Orders is orders an' he quit his post, leavin' it naked."

"I left Rummy there," broke in Lander.

"Porker, you'll act as a guard after this. Papa Clair will take your place as captain. Lander, you quit your post without being relieved. It was your place to stick there till morning if necessary. You should have depended on me to see justice was done. You're fined ten dollars and three walks. I'll not take your gun as you may need it against Injuns."

THREE days of walking decided Lander it would be better to fit into Bridger's machine than to try to be an independent cog. He also began to appreciate the virtue of placing the general good above any personal preference. He vowed he would never be sentenced to walk again. Yet very soon he was to find himself in trouble, and this time because his intentions were altruistic.

The company had been traveling along south of the Platte and now swung in close to the river. Four days after striking the river two of Bridger's hunters, who had wintered in the mountains and were now on their way to meet the outfit, brought in a load of buffalo meat. The entire company was hungry for fresh meat that was not mutton. The sheep, too, had dwindled in numbers until only Bridger and some of his right-hand men partook of it.

With the imagination of the greenhorn Lander had reveled in his anticipations of buffalo. The old timers had regaled him with descriptions of its lusciousness until his mouth watered. It did not seem as if he could wait until the meat was cooked. When it was found the buffalo chips were too green to burn and that there was no other fuel, he was foremost in foraging far and wide in search of dry sunflower stalks. By means of these the meat finally boiled and the company ravenously gathered for the feast.

As there were no dishes the cook selected a clean spot on the ground and emptied the kettle. Then the men lunged with their long butcher-knives, spearing meat with one hand and holding their little bags of salt in the other. With great zest Lander secured a promising portion but on endeavoring to bolt a morsel found it to be as tough and resilient as rubber. His teeth were strong and sharp-set by hunger but it was impossible for him to chew it, let alone to swallow it.

"Bull!" grunted Long Simons observing the collapse of Lander's hopes. "—— tough old bull, too."

It was one of the great disappointments of Lander's life. He had set his heart on that first meal of buffalo steaks. Papa Clair sought to cheer him up by assuring:

"Very soon some fat cows. Ah, name of ——! But that will be fine eating!"

"Don't tell me any more," growled Lander. "One must be a wolf to eat anything grown in this country."

They pushed on up the river to the South Platte where the company was put on the alert by a scout discovering three dead buffaloes near the confluence of the two forks.

"Injun work! We must 'a' scared 'em away before they could dress the critters," said Bridger.

Throwing out scouts on each side and far in advance they proceeded to investigate the huge carcasses. Bridger examined them carefully and was unable to find a wound.

"Boys, these fellers was killed by a bolt of lightning," he informed. "See how they fell with their noses close together. Their jackets will do for a bull-boat. Simons, Porker and Rummy, git their hides off. Papa Clair, take some men and git some willow boughs."

In what Lander considered to be a miraculously brief period of time the framework of willow was constructed and the green hides stretched over it. The result was a huge, awkward, buoyant craft, floating the water as gently as a bubble and drawing less than ten inches of water when loaded with three tons of supplies. By aid of this the company crossed the south fork to continue up the south side of the north fork. It was an ideal boat for shallow streams like the Platte, the Cheyenne and the Niobrara, but helpless in deep water where poles could not be used, and dangerous in swift waters where snags were thick, as the covering was easily punctured.

As in other things the white man had improved on the bull-boat of the Missouri tribes, which were nearly circular in shape and propelled by paddles, every stroke causing them to revolve nearly around. This boat, so quickly put together, was twice as long as it was wide and easily controlled by polemen.

After the crossing, and when Chimney Rock came into view, Lander's zeal to be helpful got him into his second bit of trouble. In the clear atmosphere the Rock appeared to be very near, although distant two or three days' journey. Turning his pack mule over to Papa Clair, Lander rode off one side and up a low bluff to see what lay beyond. From Papa Clair he had learned that Bridger believed a large band of Indians was following the outfit. He wished to act the scout and be the first to discover the red men. Instead of Indians he beheld a large body of buffalo. The cows at this season were thin and sorry-looking creatures and poor eating, but near the edge of the herd he made out several that looked very fat. Could he take fat cow meat into camp he would indeed be a hero.

With a kick of the heel he sent the mule sliding down the north side of the bluff and made for the buffaloes. The old bull sentinels lifted their shaggy heads and bellowed a rumbling warning. The herd slowly got in motion, and, by the time Lander was clear of the bluff, was in a well-organized retreat, the bulls bringing up the rear and guarding the sides most chivalrously, the cows and calves running in the middle. It was near sundown and the lateral beams of light made gorgeous play on the clouds of dust kicked up by the heavy creatures. Lander kept up the chase for a mile or more, then gave it up as useless and cursing his luck rode back to the company.

When he entered camp he was struck by the silence of the men and their averted faces. When one did look at him, especially if it were Rummy or Porker, he read keen hate in the furtive glance. Bridger sat alone before his small tent, his hands hanging limply over his knees, his brown hair brushed back, and his gray eyes frowning savagely.

"Lander, come here," he sternly called out.

Much puzzled Lander advanced and stood at attention.

"Why did you raise the buffaloes?"curtly demanded Bridger, his eyes now blazing with suppressed wrath.

"Raise the buffaloes," Lander faltered. "Why, I saw some fat cows. I wanted to kill some and bring the boys some real meat. The sheep was bad enough when we had it."

"Never mind that," interrupted Bridger. "You've been guilty of raising the buffaloes. If you was a Injun, hunting with your tribe, an' you done that your lodge would be cut to pieces by the 'soldiers' an' your dogs killed. If it was the second time you done it you'd be beaten with clubs, perhaps killed. If you was a chief it wouldn't make any difference; for when a white or red raises the buffalo it means his people must go hungry."

"But I didn't know," cried Lander.

"A poor stomach-filler to give hungry men. Another time don't try things you don't know. Put your gun in my camp. Ten dollars fine and five walks."

As Lander slunk back among the men he found no welcome. Muttered curses were hurled at him from all sides. Only the fear of Bridger saved him from violence. Even Long Simons refused to show any good nature and grunted:

"Bridger oughter make ye keep five miles behind us. Then th' Injuns would git ye."

Lander waited for Papa Clair to give him sympathy, but the old man kept away from him. In this fashion did he learn what an unpardonable offense he had committed: Had the company been out of food his thoughtlessness might have sentenced them all to starvation.

This resentment against the man who had raised the buffalo lost none of its edge even after Lander had walked away three days of his sentence. The spectacle of him limping into camp long after the evening meal had been served won him no sympathy. Papa Clair did see to it that his coarse rations were waiting for him.

Fortunately it was not his squad's turn to take a watch until near morning. With nothing but disagreeable thoughts to occupy his mind and denied the companionship of his fellows, Lander sullenly aided in building the raft of cottonwoods on which they crossed the forks of the Laramie. They found several more hunters arrived from the mountains to announce the Summer rendezvous would be held on Green River near Horse Creek. The coming of the hunters and their statement that trade would be excellent if the A. F. C. outfit did not reach the rendezvous first put Bridger in good humor. Liquor was served and a big drunk indulged in.

Bridger was also highly elated to learn that Jim Baker, who next to Carson was destined to be most highly valued by Frémont as a scout, was due to arrive soon.

"Dern him for a bunch of foolish fancies an' beliefs in Injun magic," chuckled Bridger reminiscently. "The Snake people have filled him full of funny notions. But as a mountain man there ain't nothing in the Missouri Valley that can teach him tricks."

"I remember when he went to the mountains a boy. Went for the A. F. C. I know of no man that has stuck to the mountains so close as M'sieu Baker," added Papa Clair. "I once saw him lose nine thousand dollars at a monte-bank at a rendezvous. He was on his way to the States to buy a farm. In the morning he started back for the mountains."

Bridger announced the course would be to the Sweetwater, striking the river near Independence Rock. As this route would be a little off the Platte Lander feared lest

Baker might miss the outfit and keep on traveling east. He was bold enough to say as much. Bridger eyed him in silence for a minute. Those standing by doubled up and thrust their fists into their mouths. Even Papa Clair smiled.

Bridger said:

"For just pure, cussed, fool notions there ain't nothing west of the Mississippi that can show you anything, young man. Git lost! Old Jim Baker git lost on nothing bigger'n a continent? Run by this outfit without seeing the trail? Wal, wal, live an' learn. Only some folks must live a thousand years, I reckon. How many walks left?"

"One."

"Spend it trying to turn your thoughts on yourself. Then think of the Rocky Mountains an' try to grasp some of the things you don't seem to cotton just now."

That last walk was undertaken in much sullenness of spirit. Instead of following the trail made by the many mules Lander deliberately swung off to one side. Owing to the increased danger from Indians Bridger had given back his rifle, and suddenly the ambition seized him to show these uncouth men that he was amply able to care for himself. He would get game and camp by himself. He would not bother to make the outfit's camp that night, but would take his time and might keep away for several days. Then he would coolly drop in on them and refuse food, explaining that he had been stuffing himself.

His plan resulted as any plainsman could have warned him. Once he quit the trail he was lost. He knew which way was west by the sun, but the western horizon was a mighty big stretch to aim at. He also knew the river was somewhere on his right, and that later it would bar his path where it flowed from the south and before swinging east to make the Missouri. But whether he was abreast of the company or had gone ahead of it he had no idea. He knew he had made excellent time as he had munched his hardtack rations and bacon as he walked. That night he camped alone from necessity.

There followed several days of lonely wanderings. His food, consisting of hardtack, was soon consumed. He managed to shoot a prairie hen but had traveled so wide of the river that he depended on buffalo wallows for water. He was hungry, but he suffered more from loneliness than from lack of food.

At last he came to a stream which he followed until it merged with another. He was at the junction of the Sweetwater and the north fork of the Platte, only he did not know it. In the southeast were the Laramie Mountains and in the north the Rattlesnake Hills. These were unnamed so far as his knowledge of them went. It was in the middle of the afternoon when he threw himself down by the stream to drink and bathe his head in the icy water. As he rested there a buffalo cow, fairly fat, clambered down from a circular mound and made for the river. By luck Lander managed to make a kill.

As a butcher he had much to learn but with the knife he was an artist. In a short time he had lifted the back fat and had the tongue cooking over a fire. He commenced to eat when the meat was but partly cooked.

"Ye're a —— of a feller!" remarked a voice behind him.

Flopping wildly about he beheld a white man, tanned to the color of an Indian, his hair long and unkempt, his face smothered in whiskers.

"Who might ye be, a comin' out hyar an' skeerin' all th' Injuns up into Canada by yer bold ways?"

"Have some grub. I belong with Jim Bridger's outfit. Strayed away like a fool greenhorn. Who are you?"

"Jim Baker, fresh from Green River. Reckon I'll cut off a leetle more meat an' set it to cookin'."

So this was the man who was indirectly responsible for his keeping aloof from his mates until he became lost, Lander mused. This shaggy creature was the man whose coming was so eagerly looked forward to by Bridger. Lander was disappointed. He watched Baker skilfully slice off several portions and proceed to roast them. He observed how he tossed a bit over his shoulder but did not know this was an offering to ghosts.

Baker at last satisfied his enormous appetite and produced a pipe from the bead-embroidered holder worn around his neck. Filling this and lighting it he puffed to the sky and earth and four wind gods, then abruptly inquired—

"How 'bout Injuns?"

"None round here. Ain't seen a one during my tramp. Been going it alone for four days."

"Lawd a massy! But ye be some traveler!" admired Baker. "An' ain't seen no Injuns?"

"Nothing but wolves. There's two now looking down at us from the top of the bluff behind us."

"What's th' color o' their legs?" lazily asked Baker without turning his head.

"Only their heads and shoulders show. Now they're sneaking away."

Baker became silent, seeming to forget he was not alone. Next he muttered to himself and repeated something Lander thought was gibberish, but which was a Snake charm against evil medicine; for Baker was as superstitious as the Indians among whom he had lived.

"How'd ye git lost?" he abruptly asked.

Lander explained, adding:

"Bridger laughed at my thinking you might pass the outfit without knowing it. But here you are. The laugh will be on him."

"Most likely," gravely agreed Baker. "Ye're a queer young cuss. Can't ye see ye got ahead o' th' outfit? Meetin' me proves that. Ye walked fast, prob'ly a bit skeered. Bridger halted an' sent men back to find ye. He must be cussin' in a way that'd do a man's heart good by this time. While his men was goin' back ye swung out one side an' passed th' outfit. I suttinly want to be round when Jim lets out on ye."

Saying this Baker fished out his medicine bag and cautiously opened it, screening the act with his body. Tired of being ignored and criticized, Lander took his rifle and strolled toward the bluffs.

Baker was absorbed with his medicine and took no notice of Lander's departure until he was well under the bluff. Replacing the bag he glanced about and beheld Lander behind a boulder, his rifle aiming at two wolves. The wolves' heads were all that was visible.

"Don't shoot!" yelled Baker. "Come back here!"

He spoke too late. The rifle cracked and one of the wolves came crashing down the side of the bluff. It rolled to Lander's feet and caused him to think he had lost his senses by exposing the legs of a man.

"Good Heavens!" he gasped, staggering back.

With an oath Baker ran to him, yelping—

"Wanter cook us, ye derned fool?"

"What is it?" faltered Lander, glaring at the wolf's head and body and the pair of legs.

"Injuns spyin' on us. Now that ye've salted one o' them th' hull tribe'll be here after our ha'r."

With that he ripped aside the wolfskin and revealed a warrior in full paint. One glance and he muttered:

"—— an' mis'ry! Jest as I feared. Blackfoot! Lawdy massy, but won't they walk it to us! Wal, he's dead. Wish they all was. Git yer sculp an' we'll be pickin' out a good place to die in."

"Scalp? I—I don't want it," shuddered Lander. "I thought it was a wolf."

"Yer medicine must be mighty weak. Never right to waste ha'r. This is a prime one, too. It counts something to show a Blackfoot sculp. I'll make a feast for my medicine an' give it th' sculp."

Lander turned his head as the mountain man whipped out his knife and quickly raised the warrior's scalp lock and thrust it into his hunting shirt. Then he sounded the Snake cry of defiance.

"You'll call them down on us," remonstrated Lander.

"If they don't kill us ye'll make me die laffin'," informed Baker. "Foller me right pert. I've got a mule hid back a piece, but mules can't save us. It's for us to hole up where we can git water. Load yer rifle an' be ready to drag in th' buf'ler meat when I find a good place."

Baker scurried into the rocks near the river and found an overhanging cliff with a small alcove at its base. There they dragged the cow and collected dry buffalo chips for fuel. If closely besieged it would be impossible, Lander believed, to cover the short distance to the river without challenging death, but Baker smiled grimly and said he would guarantee a full supply of water.

"What we want to do first is to make a fire an cook up all the meat we can. Some of it we'll jerk. Meat cured in th' sun will keep a good spell."

As he finished speaking he grabbed Lander, who was bending over the cow, and violently hurled him backward. As he did so a dozen war arrows stuck into the carcass.

"Th' derned cusses have come!" grunted Baker, dropping behind a boulder and nursing his rifle.

## CHAPTER VII

### BLACKFOOT AND CROW

"THEY'RE shootin' from up thar," said Baker, pointing to the top of the opposite cliff. "Them are Siksika arrers, worst tribe o' th' Blackfeet. They're worse 'n th' Bloods, an' th' Bloods is worse'n th' Piegans, an' th' three tribes o' th' Blackfeet is worse'n Sioux or Aricaras in fightin' th' whites."

Then with awe in his voice he informed:

"Each tribe has medicine bundles what's most amazin' strong. They worship Napi, th' Old Man, an' he suttinly has took mighty good care of 'em so far. They're allers ag'in' us Americans, but they'll take their trade to H. B. posts fast 'nough. There ain't a fur company west o' th' Mississip' that ain't tried to make peace with 'em an' git a chance at their furs. Bridger 'n' me have even tried to ketch one o' th' devils alive to hold him an' tame him so's we could have some one to take a talk back to th' tribe. Lawdy massy, but there's rich pickin' for th' trader what gits in. Reckon McKenzie o' Fort Union will be th' first. He's got a white hunter what speaks their lingo. We've tried to git at 'em through some o' their neighbors, but they are allers fightin' th' Sioux, Cree, Assiniboins, Flatheads an' th' Snakes. I'd give a season's profits if I had one o' their medicine bundles." Then hastily, as if apologizing, "Not that my medicine ain't strong 'nough, but sometimes ye can git a new medicine that'll work for ye when yer old medicine gits tired."

"They seem to be very quiet. Perhaps they are gone," suggested Lander.

"Ye make me feel like I did afore I ever come to th' mountains," said Baker with a grim smile. "Folks back East allers use to be tellin' 'bout th' noble Injun! Gone away when they've got a fine chance to cut white throats? Sho! I'm plumb 'shamed of ye. I've lived among Injuns an' like some tribes. I know some I'd trust quicker'n I would most whites. Their medicines is powerful strong. Anybody oughter know that. But after all's said they are the most onsartain varmints in th' world. They ain't only half human. Younker, did ye ever see a human that ye'd fed an' treated to th' best fixin's in yer lodge who'd steal yer hosses when he come to go away? Wal, that's th' Injun's notion o' sayin', 'Much obleeged.' My idee is never to give 'em any gifts. Jest ask th' whole b'ilin' to a big feast an' raise half their ha'r. T'other half'll be mighty sharp set to keep peaceful for a while."

"I believe they've gone away," insisted Lander, who was in no mood to listen to Baker's eccentric observations.

"Some trick," mumbled Baker thoughtfully. "S'pose ye jest keep yer eyes to th' front while I look at my medicine."

With great contempt for Baker's superstitions Lander stared toward the river, seeing no sign of the enemy except the fringe of arrows sticking in the carcass of the buffalo. Baker faced toward the cliff behind him, produced his medicine bag and cautiously opened and closed it four times, and muttered:

"That oughter crack —— open 'bout a mile if it ain't lost its old kick. That last sculp, even if I didn't kill it, oughter give any honest medicine a heap o' guts. I'll b'ile some berries an' make it a real feast first chance I git."

Lander by this time had discovered he was very thirsty. And as Baker was absorbed with his heathenish rites, the river but a few yards away and no enemy in sight it seemed a simple matter to advance and fill a hat with water. Baker restored the medicine bag to the bosom of his hunting shirt and turned in time to behold Lander start for the river with a Blackfoot warrior dropping from the heavens to alight within a few feet of him. The long rawhide rope, dangling from the edge of the cliff, was immediately utilized by a second warrior.

"—— woke up!" yelled Baker, snatching up his rifle and shooting the warrior from the rope.

Clubbing his weapon he sprang to assist Lander, who by this time had drawn his knife from his boot. The Indian, although realizing he was lost unless instantly reinforced, leaped at Lander and attempted to run him through with a long butcher-knife.

"Load your rifle! I'll take care of this one," called out Lander, parrying the thrust.

Baker reversed his gun and proceeded to reload it, his eyes staring admiringly at the young man's unexpected display of talent.

"Rip him, boy!" he shouted. "Lawdy massy! But that medicine o' mine is shore kickin' an' a r'arin'! Fetched 'em right outer th' sky." Then anxiously: "But some things can be overdone. No medicine oughter fetch in more trouble than a man can dish away."

He glanced apprehensively at the swinging rope, then back to the duelists circling about each other.

"Keep away, Baker! This is my game. Watch the rope! They crossed over from the other side. That's why they were still so long."

"Git after him," Baker anxiously urged. "He must have a good medicine, or he'd never come down here—Godfrey! Look out!"

The warrior suddenly shifted his tactics and with a series of lightning-like thrusts took the offensive. Baker cocked his rifle but dared not fire at the dodging figures. He called on Lander to look out, to leap to one side; and then came the miracle. The warrior's knife leaped from his hand and described a glittering arc that ended in the racing river, and he went down with a gush of blood from his throat. Lander, weak with excitement and his exertions, stood trembling and staring at his work.

Baker caught him by the arm and drew him in under the cliff, loudly bawling—

"I'll trade ye a dozen packs o' prime beaver for yer medicine!"

A howl of rage came from the top of the cliff, while futile arrows rattled about the opening of the alcove. But there was no further attempt to descend the rope.

"Of course it was my medicine what fetched 'em down," declared Baker, fearful lest his praise of Lander's medicine might incite jealousy. "When I open that bag four time an' p'int it towards a Injun he's pretty nigh bein' my meat. Wish I could git out there an' sculp 'em!"

"That can wait," snarled Lander, overwrought by his experience and his disgust at a practise commonplace among mountain men. "They must be coming in a bunch. Hear them yelling?"

"It's a small band or they'd been yere afore this," growled Baker, wrinkling his brows. "Reckon they're in more trouble. My medicine has sot a trap for 'em. Reckon Bridger's come up. No, there ain't no sounds o' guns."

The clamor on top of the cliff now receded although still audible. Baker pricked his ears and from the ferocious chorus began to deduce the truth.

"Crows jumped 'em!" he suddenly roared, darting from under the cliff and pausing to tear off the two scalps. "Come on! They're ridin' down th' south side o' th' cliff to the plain."

Securing his gun Lander raced after him. They rounded the end of the cliff and came out into the broken country. The river side of the cliff was less than a hundred feet high, and already the Blackfeet had withdrawn from it and were retiring in a compact body and repulsing the attacks of a much larger body of Indians.

"I know'd they was Crows by their yells. See what large bows they use. Make 'em stout with elk or bighorn an' rattlesnake skins. There's mighty good medicine in a snake skin if ye know th' right songs an' can git on th' good side of it. But if ye fail it'll turn on ye like a rattler."

"What shall we do? Go help the Crows or take our mules and ride for it?"

"Stick along here. Crows won't hurt us. They'll take yer mule an' mine if they find it. If we should run away they'd take both guns. Most amazin' thieves."

The two watched the haughty Blackfeet skilfully continue their retreat. Two of their warriors fell before the murderous arrow fire, but were almost immediately scooped up and thrown across their ponies. The Crows, superb horsemen, rushed them from all sides, riding low like Comanches with only the tip of a moccasin showing. But although outnumbering their hereditary enemies, the Crows accomplished nothing more than to slay or severely wound three men and to drive them all away from the river.

BAKER returned to the river and built a fire. He began cooking buffalo meat and urged Lander to eat.

"They'll gobble down everything when they git here," he warned.

Lander was not hungry. The spectacle of the two dead warriors sickened him.

A rumbling clatter of hoofs and much demoniac yelling and the white men were surrounded by the Crows. The first to arrive leaped to the ground and began feasting on the buffalo. The leader, a weathered wisp of a man, whose hair and skin looked dead but whose eyes were two fires, walked up to Lander and yanked the rifle from his hand. Lander reached to his boot.

"Keep away from that knife!" snarled Baker. "Jest smile."

The leader wheeled on Baker and reached out to appropriate his rifle. The mountain man laughed in his face and taunted—

"Black Arrow can not take scalps, so he must take his friend's rifle."

The Indian drew back, then recognized Baker and sullenly thrust out his hand in greeting and said:

"My young men need guns. But you are our friend. We will take only one gun. That shall pay for saving your lives."

At this Baker became all Indian. He slapped his breast haughtily and in the tongue of the Absaroke said:

"Chief of the Sparrowhawk people, look up the river bank. You will find two dead Blackfoot dogs there. Here are their scalps. Why does Black Arrow come riding in like a foolish Indian raising the buffalo and scaring his white friend's game away? Black Arrow has spoiled our hunting just as the killing was beginning. Why did he not keep away till we had killed more Blackfeet? Shall we give him a gun for that?"

The dead Blackfeet and their scalps now flaunted in the chief's face carried pardon for the trapper's insolence. The Absaroke, or Crows, could forgive much in a man who had killed two of their terrible foes. There was a rush to examine the slain warriors, and when it was found that one was killed by a knife, although the two loaded rifles had not made that necessary, the chief reflected the respectful attitude of his followers when he asked—

"Why use the knife when you had guns?"

"Why waste lead on those dogs?" countered Baker. "We need our rifles for game, not for killing Blackfeet. My young brother is mighty knife-fighter." Then in English. "Where d'ye l'arn th' knife, younker?"

"Papa Clair."

"Loaded an' primed!" Then in Absaroke: "There is no warrior in your band who can touch him with a knife without losing blood. He is big medicine. Stand your best man before him. If he brings blood without losing blood you shall keep the rifle. If my young brother's medicine is the stronger you shall not take the rifle."

To Lander and scarcely able to conceal his anxiety he said: "I've told 'em they ain't got a man that can tech ye with a knife without bein' blooded. If Papa Clair l'arned ye th' knife ye oughter be prime. Have I spoke too strong?"

"I don't think so," Lander modestly replied. "Papa Clair said I knew all he knew."

"Glory be! Don't kill. Jest prove ye're best man." To the chief: "Got any braves who believe in their medicine?"

Black Arrow scowled at the insolence of the challenge and yelled to his men. One of them, wearing much red cloth as a fringe for his leggings, leaped from his pony and pulling his knife ran toward Lander. With a most savage expression on his haughty face he held the knife upright before his eyes, then lowered it and contemptuously addressed Lander.

"He says he'll cut th' sacred totem o' th' Crows (the Swastika cross) on yer face, then cut yer throat. How's yer medicine?"

"I don't know," muttered Lander, inwardly flinching before the warrior's ferocious bearing. "But I know what Papa Clair has told me."

"Then ye know 'nough to give him his needin's with one hand tied to yer foot. He's waitin'. Git after him an' when they ain't lookin' I'll open my medicine bag at him. If our two medicines can't fetch him nothin' short o' th' devil can."

Lander had no heart for the business. He resented Baker's forcing him into the trial. He had fought and killed one Indian to save his life. But this contest, merely to prove his superiority, was not to his taste. However, the brave was growing impatient and sneering openly as he believed he read the other's hesitancy. With a flash of his hand Lander drew Papa Clair's gift knife and stood on guard.

The Indians exclaimed in admiration as they beheld the weapon. The haft was embellished with much silver of Spanish workmanship and there was a fretwork of the white metal on the upper half of the big blade.

Lander's opponent endeavored to rush in and bewilder his man with repeated onslaughts. His point streaked back and forth, all but ripping the skin above the eyes. For a minute Lander worked only on the defensive. Then anger grew up in his heart and calmed his nerves and he stopped giving ground and began advancing. Each forward step was taken with a precision that suddenly stilled the chorus of jeers. And as he advanced he formed his purpose and drove his man toward the river. His blade parried and menaced but refrained from touching the painted breast, although it was obvious to the spectators it could have been fleshed to the hilt several times.

The Indian suspected he was being played with and sought to keep clear of the river, but each attempt to work one side resulted in a vicious slash of the glittering steel that fenced him in. The cries of his friends now told the warrior he was on the brink of the bank and he made a last desperate rally and flung himself forward recklessly. Instantly the stabbing knife was pushed one side and lifting his hand Lander struck heavily with the haft, the blow falling full between the scowling eyes and knocking the man into the icy current. Lander had had his man at his mercy and had vanquished him without losing or drawing a drop of blood.

"He has big knife medicine," reluctantly admitted Black Arrow.

Then to Lander he spoke rapidly. Baker interpreted:

"He says if ye will come to live with him in th' valley o' th' Big Horn he'll give ye a big lodge an' his darter for a wife. Th' Crows is allers fond o' havin' white men live with 'em. He says he'll let ye handle th' Crow trade in buf'ler robes an' bighorn leather. Th' robes is mighty fine an' it's a chance to trade for a mighty fine profit that most old mountain men would jump at. If I wa'n't tied up with th' Snakes I'd jump at it myself."

"Tell him I am with Jim Bridger, that I want him to bring the Crow trade to Bridger on Green River."

"Jim Bridger won't hold ye to yer bargain when he knows ye can better yerself. Crow women are mighty likely-lookin' women."

"Tell him what I say. Sometimes I'll visit him and teach his young men how to handle the knife."

Baker choked back a laugh and muttered:

"Lawdy massy! First trip out here an' ye're puttin' on more airs then Kit Carson or Jim Bridger hisself." Then gravely:

"But that's th' way to hoot when yer medicine is good an' strong. Makes yer medicine feel proud an' keen to work for ye, too. I'll tell him what ye say. Won't do any hurt to make a friend o' him an' git first whack at his trade. They've been carryin' th' most of it to Fort Union."

Black Arrow was disappointed at Lander's refusal to join his tribe, but readily promised to take a good trade to the Green River rendezvous, but vowed he would deliver it to none but Lander. The warrior who had been knocked into the river now came up to Lander with, as the latter believed, hostile intentions. There was a knob the size of an egg between his eyes. Baker was in time with his warning—

"Th' critter don't mean no harm."

The Indian gestured for permission to examine the knife that had conquered him. It was a beautiful weapon, and the brave saved his pride by attributing his defeat to the medicine in it rather than to Lander's skill. He gazed at it longingly, then led up his pony and offered to trade. Lander might have been tempted as the animal was far superior to the average run of horseflesh owned by mountain men, but Baker warned:

"Don't swap yer medicine. Ye're big guns with 'em now. I'll tell 'em th' medicine won't work for no one but yerself. Ye're lucky if yer medicine ain't mad at ye for even thinkin' o' doin' sech a thing."

So Lander refused, and Baker softened it down in interpreting it, then drew Black Arrow one side and talked with him some minutes. Coming back to Lander he explained:

"Chief says them Blackfeet, 'bout a hundred 'n' fifty of 'em, are jest back from visitin' their friends, th' 'Rapahos, an' on their way to a big band now campin' in Jackson's Hole near th' Three Tetons. Says th' big band held up a H. B. trader an' took a British flag an' forty packs o' beaver from him. If these Crows had put up a real fight they could 'a' wiped out this small band, as there must be more'n two hundred here. But it was Injun style—gallop lickety-split, shoot arrers while t'other side runs away, then quit an' never git down to real business. Th' Blackfeet will fetch their friends back to chaw th' Crows up."

SEVERAL young bucks who had followed the river down now began riding back and forth and waving their robes. Black Arrow leaped on his pony and rode up a low bluff. The bucks had signaled "enemy."

Lander mounted his mule and followed

the chief. Far in the east was dust. Black Arrow's sharp old eyes studied it for a minute; then he turned to Lander and drew his hand across his forehead in the sign for a hat, or white men. Lander was obtuse and the chief touched his hand and then passed it up and down his arms and body. Lander understood this: "All white," and yelled down to Jim Baker:

"Bet it's Bridger's outfit. Chief says they're white men."

Baker repeated this to the Indians surrounding him, and instantly the war-like preparations ceased. The bucks now came tearing up the river making the sign of the hat. As Black Arrow rejoined his men there was a flash of action caused by a brave bringing in the mule Baker had concealed before surprizing Lander at the river bank. Baker appropriated the animal without bothering to explain, and the warrior pulled an ax.

Lander drove his mule between the two and pulled his knife. Black Arrow intervened in time to prevent a tragedy. Explanations followed and peace was restored just as the scouts came up to announce the supposed enemy were some thirty white men, riding as fast as their weary mounts could bring them.

Advising Black Arrow to remain where he was and keep all his men with him Baker motioned to Lander and rode down the river to meet their friends. At the head of the band were Bridger and Papa Clair. Lander, knowing the strength of the outfit, saw that a dozen or more men had been left behind, doubtless to bring up the pack animals.

"My young friend!" joyfully called out Papa Clair, swinging up his hand. "We heard shots! We feared! We rode!"

"Howdy, Jim," sang out Baker.

"Howdy, Jim. Did you find him, or did he find you?" asked Bridger, nodding coldly toward Lander.

"Found each other. Had a muss with Blackfeet. He shot one afore th' scrimmage. Then I got one with my old gun, an' he got another with his knife. Big medicine in that knife o' his'n if any one asks ye. Then Black Arrer with his Crows come along an' drove th' skunks off. Now th' old cuss is back there waitin' to be told he's a big Injun."

"Lander, you've held up my outfit two days," sternly informed Bridger. "You're too much trouble to suit me. I'm sending an express back to St. Louis. Make ready to go with it."

"I stay in the mountains if I ever get into them, Mr. Bridger. If I can't work for you perhaps I can work for some other outfit. If no one will hire me I'll turn free trader."

"Free trader?" scoffed Bridger. "You a trader? Where's your outfit? If you had any goods who'd trade with you? You're crazy."

"M'sieu Bridger, but you are speaking to my young friend," gently remonstrated Papa Clair.

"You can't fix a fight on me, Papa, if you try for a year. Lander's all right but he's out of place up here. When we stopped for two days and searched for him we were giving the A. F. C. that much advantage in trying to make the rendezvous ahead of us. It won't do."

"Ye got plenty o' time, Jim," drawled Baker. "Then ag'in ye ain't goin' to lose no trade o' th' younker. He licked one o' Black Arrer's smartest Injuns in a knife fight an' th' chief wants to take him for his son. Failin' in that he says he'll fetch his trade to Green River an' turn it in to th' younker, which means to ye. Hard to beat them Crows for robes made gay with porcupine quills an' fancy sewin'. Reckon he'd clean up all th' Crow trade if he took a outfit an' went an' lived with 'em."

Papa Clair's white mustaches went up as he smiled in keen enjoyment. Bridger's face broke into a wide grin and he whimsically surrendered:

"Reckon the express can git along without you, Lander. Only after this either keep ahead, or behind, or with us. Now we'll have a talk with the chief. Come along, Baker. The rest of you better stay back here till I've smoked with the old cuss."

The men gathered around Lander and eagerly listened to his experience. That he had killed two Blackfeet was enough to erase his name from the roll of greenhorns, and even Porker treated him civilly. Long Simons acted most peculiar however. He kept in the background, yet conspicuous because of his red belt, and alternated between deep chuckles and heavy frowns. Lander liked him, and leaving his mule went to him, remarking—

"You don't seem very glad to see me back."

"Been trailin' ye ever since ye failed to turn up on th' second night. Jest now I've got some trouble an' some fun of my own on my hands. Stick round an' ye'll see what I mean."

"Here come the two Jims," answered Papa Clair.

"Everything is all right, men," called out Bridger. "We'll camp beyond the Crows. No quarreling with them, remember. They'll treat us right if we treat them right. What now, Baker?"

The last as Baker gave a snort of anger and slid from his mule, threw aside his rifle and discarded his belt. Lander was amazed to behold Long Simons removing his red belt and weapons and throwing them on the ground, his broad face grinning sheepishly.

"Holy blue! Are they crazy?" gasped Papa Clair.

"What's the matter, Jim?" demanded Bridger, his gray eyes twinkling.

"Jest a sort of a childish game. This lank, long perrarie [dog let on at th' last rendezvous that my fightin' with grizzlies, when I killed two with my knife, was all a bundle o' lies. I swore I'd make him eat his words if he ever dared come back to th' mountains. An' I'm goin' to do it."

"Talk is cheap," sneered Long Simons. "Ye've kicked half-starved Injuns round so long that ye forgit white men don't crawl when ye bleat. Come along. I'll show ye one grizzly ye can't lick. Afore I'm done with ye, ye'll be tellin' th' boys th' truth. What ye killed with a knife was only two sick wolves."

"No biting or gouging," commanded Bridger. "This is no time for fun. After this all hoss-play must be finished at St. Charles."

"He won't have nothin' more to settle after I git through with him," declared Long Simons as he stripped off his shirt. "His troubles is about to be ended. Come to these arms, ye leetle grizzly tamer."

With a roar of anger Baker jumped into him. The battles Lander had witnessed at St. Charles were tame affairs compared with this. With hoots of joy the mountain men formed a wide ring. Some of the Indians galloped up and to them Bridger explained that two of his men were playing a game. The two combatants discarded all finesse and came together with the intention of sticking until only one was able to stand.

Lander held his breath at the terrific punishment each inflicted and received. It seemed impossible that the human frame could survive such assaults. Baker was an inch shorter than Simons and quite a few pounds lighter. But his technique was that of a panther, a tremendous driving power that allowed his antagonist no breathing spell; an implacable hurricane that would rage until there was nothing left to assail. Long Simons physically was far above the average caliber of man, and grunted with joy in finding a full fight was brought to him.

From the moment they clashed it was almost impossible to distinguish them. They became a revolving mass, two dynamos that whirled over on the ground like a fly-wheel. When they came erect it was only to fall again.

There was no waiting, no cautious testing of the other's strength. Each was confident of his own might, and sought to terminate the contest as speedily as possible. There was no defensive against offensive. It was offensive against offensive, two separate plants confidently conceived and meeting in furious collision.

"Jee-ru-sa-leem!" screamed Rummy as some invisible force seemed to hurl the two apart and then bring them smashing together. The Indians, now generally attracted, watched with glittering eyes and low grunts of amazement.

Inside of five minutes of incessant, whirlwind tactics both were practically stripped to the buff. Suddenly Long Simons' arm slipped under Baker's arm and up over the shoulder with the broad palm smothering the face and pressing backward.

"Give in, ye babby bear fighter!" gasped Simons.

Lander realized that with a bit more pressure Baker's neck would break should he refuse to release the pressure of his own left arm. Back rocked his head, his wind shut off by the hand plastered over mouth and nose. Then his two fists came together on Simons' throat, each traveling only a few inches. The big fellow relaxed his terrible hold, tottered and fell with blood streaming from his mouth and nose.

He groaned and rolled over on his back, glared up into Baker's wild face and tried to get back on his feet.

"Was them babby b'ars?" faintly asked Baker, his bloody knuckles drawn back for a final blow.

Long Simons wet his hot lips and pumped for air. His voice sounded ridiculously small for so large a man as he weakly replied:

"Reg'lar full grown 'uns, Jim. Extry big 'uns. Belt's on th' ground some'ers."

TO BE CONTINUED

# The Woolly

### By Richard Butler Glaenzer

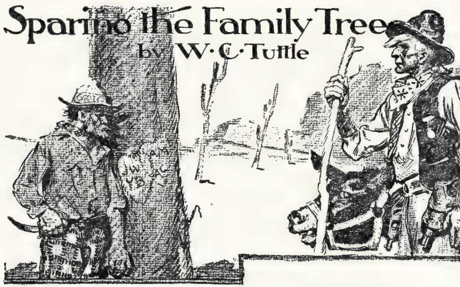
TALK as you please of a scrap with a Hun
 Caught like a rat in a corner,
If you are looking for trouble, not fun,
 Sail on an old Cape Horner
Or, better, a South Pole whaler, lad,
And face the wind where the wind runs mad.

A cornered Hun is no more than a man,
 And the better man will lick him;
But the wind, old when the world began,
 Could tackle Old Ned and trick him;
And of all foul winds the Woolly's the worst,
Of a black sky born, by a milk sea nursed.

It will come so quick and 'll lam so hard,
 All's over before you have started;
It will catch the cagiest off his guard,
 Put crimps in the stoutest-hearted:
It isn't a thing you can fight with a gun,
Bayonet, knife or your fists, my son.

# Sparing the Family Tree

## by W. C. Tuttle



*Author of "Shepherds for Science," "Evidently Not," etc.*

"TAOS" THOMPSON says he didn't come from no place, and ain't got no definite place to go. There ain't no doubt in my mind but what he's got ancestors, but whether the name of Thompson covers the family or not is problematical, but that don't matter.

Probably my family would wonder how I can spell my name B-r-o-w-n, but as I said before, that don't matter.

Down here in the cactus we don't care what a man calls himself. It's what he calls others that makes his visit pleasant or unpleasant, and anyway, why drag the family tree around with you when you ain't doing nothing to make it flourish?

One day me and Amarilly—Amarilly is a melodious beast of burden, which is anti everything except sleep—was plodding across a particularly torrid stretch of desert when I happens to see a human being trying to gather itself into the shade of a two-foot snag of mesquite.

We pilgrims over and finds this here shade-hunter just about to cash in from drouth. I offers him my canteen, and says—

"Have a little water, old trailer?"

He looks up at me and sort of grins out of his cracked face, and reaches slowly for the canteen, as he mumbles out of split lips—

"If that's—that's the best you've got."

That's how I met Taos Thompson, the only prospector I ever knowed who didn't care whether he found gold or not. He didn't dream of finding a fortune, but he did love to prospect. I met him early in the Springtime, and for three months we pesticated around the devil's griddle trying to find gold where it ain't.

Taos is about five feet six inches from his heels to his red top-knot, and he's got all the points and angles that human bones are heir to. He could be thirty years old or three hundred, but I'd make a bet that Taos hits plumb close to the fifty-mile post.

His hair and whiskers are his crowning beauty. Each and every hair seems to want to grow in a different direction, and the only way he can comb it is to soak it in axle-grease. He's got long, skinny wrists, and a pair of freckled hands that ain't got a match no place in the world. Man, them hands defy comparison, and the way they can hop a gun out of a holster is a caution. They just seems to envelop the butt of a big Colt, and it looks plumb like the smoke was coming out of the end on his index-finger. Toas sure pays his way and don't ask favors of no man.

I ain't saying much about me, except that Taos' head just comes to the top button of my vest, and I weighs a hundred and thirty-five. I'm kind of a bleached blond and ordinarily I packs two guns. One gun makes me one-sided, so I has to ballast with the other.

Seems like every place we go they finds new names for us, but when we leave they usually sticks their heads out of the cellar and calls us Mr. Brown and Mr. Thompson. Taos can lick anybody that I've got the nerve to tackle, so we fits together well.

We're poking along through the sand, giving oral support to Amarilly, and finally stops at some vile-smelling pot-hole, which has got a name 'cause it's wet. If you ain't never poked into the desert country and had your dry tongue scrape all the enamel off your teeth, you don't know why men take off their hats to a moist spot and give it a name. This was known as Poison Springs.

Taos is educated. I never knowed a fellow what hankered for reading like he does. One day he found an old newspaper, and he tied up the outfit right there for over an hour. You'd 'a' thought he had enough reading to satisfy himself for a while, but it ain't more than two weeks before he's wishing for something to read.

We pokes into Poison Springs and stops. I see Taos cock his neck like a sage-hen, and then he starts sneaking ahead, slow-like. I yanks loose one of my guns and sneaks right behind him. We sneaks along through the greasewood, me with my gun held high and handsome for anything that hops, and all to once Taos drops on his knees, and grunts—

"Glory!"

Then he stands up with a piece of newspaper in his hand.

"Saw it sticking on that little bush," says he, happy-like.

"——!" says I. "I thought you saw something." And then I went back and took the plunder off Amarilly.

I know that Taos ain't going to mean nothing to me for a long time so I builds a fire and starts a feed. A newspaper to Taos is like alcohol to a Injun. A feller like him ought to own a book.

I tried to pry him loose when supper is ready, but he just grunts and goes on reading. It's like trying to wake up a hop-head, so I eats in silence and watches that humped-up figure spell out news. Pretty soon he gets up and walks over to the fire, still reading, and stumbles over the coffee-pot. Then he sets down in a frying-pan, puts a slice of bacon in his cup, and sweetens it with a dash of beans. Then he says—

" 'Yallerstone', have you ever felt the call of love?"

I looks at him and shakes my head.

After a while he fills his pipe, lights it, flips the pipe out on the sand, and puts the match in his mouth. I wipes out the dishes with sand and rolls up in my blanket, while he still digs into them pages.

I'm just dropping off to sleep, when he says—

"Yallerstone, what do you know about me?"

"Enough to keep my opinions to myself," says I. "There ain't no use of me and you quarreling, so we'll pass the reply."

He nods, solemn-like, and then says—

"Yallerstone, if the right girl came along would you consider matrimony?"

"Why speak of tender emotions, Taos?" I inquires. "Kick off your boots and go to sleep. You need a shot of calomel, if you asks me."

"Love is a great thing, Yallerstone. I'm slipping into the sere and yaller leaf, old-timer, but you ain't so ancient. You ought to settle down before it's too late. I might 'a' stood a chance once, Yallerstone. She sure was a dingbuster. I gave her back her watch and locket."

I sets up in my blanket and gawps at Taos. The idea of a old desert-rat like him receiving presents from a lady seemed wicked thoughts.

"Taos," says I, "what was you doing with her jewelery?"

"Two year ago it happens," says he, reflective-like. "I'm a knight of the road, as the poeting fellers call it, and I've halted the Cinnibar stage. I've got 'em all chinning themselves on a cloud, with the driver assaying their pockets for *dinero*, when I gazes upon her face. She was a passenger, Yallerstone—a passenger." Taos sighs deep into his whiskers. "A passenger."

"And you gave her back her ante?" I asks.

"Uh-huh," he sighs. "And down deep in the valves of my heart lies a spark of love that only needs to be blowed upon a little to break into conflagration. Yallerstone Brown, after I gazed into her eyes I hears a different song coming from the birds, and even the buzzards has took upon themselves a sort of beauty. I ain't seen her since, so I've sort of vegetated since she left me."

"Did you quit knighting on the highways then?" I asks, and he nods.

"What did you pe-ruse that seems to bring back memories of yore?" I asks.

"THIS HERE paper, Yallerstone. It appears to be full of matrimonial chances. There's a lot of females which seems to have trouble in getting mated up, and they ask for what they want. In one certain location there appears a item that sounds attractive. Here she is:

> Lady about twenty-seven years of age, blonde, affectionate, educated and refined, would like to meet a real Western man. Must be sober and industrious, and of good appearance. Object matrimony. Adress Box 1234, Hillsdale, Ill.

"Now," continues Taos, "you qualify, Yallerstone."

"Westerner," says I. "Sober right now, and if following a burro is industry I'm there like a he-buzzard."

Taos nods, solemn-like.

"I reckon we're both tired of living alone. Maybe a woman could make something out of both of us if they had a chance."

"Maybe," says I, "but I doubt it. Was this a blonde lady what you held up?"

"Uh-huh. Yaller as a canary."

"Go to bed, Taos," I advises, but he sets there perusing the paper and nodding to himself. All to once he casts the paper aside and says:

"Yallerstone, will you go to Hillsdale with me. Will you?"

"Too far. Amarilly is getting sore-footed, and I've got a corn."

"Only to Rawhide, Yallerstone," he pleads. "I've got some money in the bank there, and I'll split a thousand with you, and we'll pasture Amarilly. Will you, Yallerstone?"

"No!" says I, flat-footed. "Nix, not and no time, Taos. Me and you have been partners since the Springtime sprung, and I like you—dang your frowsy old face—and I'd help you rob a train or a bank, but when you asks me to be an accessory to matrimonial plans I rears on to my hind legs and balks exceedingly.

"In the first place, Taos, the town is too far away. Maybe said female is already married. If me and you got out of sight of the Funeral Hills we'd get lost. No, Taos, we're better off here. Far be it from me to chide you if love has penetrated your internal organs, but to a pilgrimage into the East as part and parcel to your connubial scheme, Taos—never! I will not, and that is finality in all it's phases. *Sabe?*"

WELL, we kissed Amarilly good-by at the pasture gate. Before the ticket-agent would sell us a ticket he finds out from the sheriff if we're leaving of our own free will, and his, and then he hands us forty feet of green paper and wishes us *adios*.

We mounts that train at midnight, and I hope to die if I ever seen such a bunkhouse. I paid for a bed, and that porter feller made me climb a ladder and get into a bird's nest. I reckon I got some of my clothes off, but I didn't have room enough to find out what it was. I hooked one arm over a baby's hammock, and prayed all night for a pair of spurs. The next morning is awful. I'm so kinked up that I can't get my pants on. The sheet is so slippery that I can't even inch into them, and when I peeks out the place is full of folks.

"Taos, are you still there?" I yelps.

"I am!" he yells back. "Are you dressed?"

"I don't think so," says I. "I ain't got room to see higher than my knees, but I think I'm still outside of my pants. Are you dressed?"

"No!" he yelps, and I hears him bump his head. "Gol blast the gol blasted—" and then he whoops, "Ex-cuse me, folks, but the ladies better retire, 'cause Taos Thompson is coming out into the open to dress!"

Man, I'd say that they retired. I fell out on my hands and knees, and we both dressed in the privacy of the middle of the car. That trip was one succession of kinky nights. I tried to sleep on the back porch, but the conductor got peeved, and I went back to my perch. Taos finds something to read, which makes him unfit as a companion, and I sure longs for Amarilly and the desert.

One morning I'm setting there in a seat, looking at the scenery, when a lady gets on the train. She stops beside my seat and looks down at me.

"I beg your pardon," says she, "is this your seat?"

"You're welcome, ma'am," says I. "I don't think so. I reckon I just sort of squatted here, being as it ain't got no location notice nor nothing to show ownership."

"Thanks," says she, and sets right down beside me.

I looks out the window for a spell, and when I turns my head she's looking right at me.

"Pardon me," says she, "but you're from the West?"

"Yes'm," I admits. "I wish I wasn't."

"Why?" she asks, elevating her eyebrows.

"Well," says I, "if I wasn't, ma'am, I'd be there now. See how it is?"

She don't say nothing for a while, and then—

"Going very far?"

"Ma'am," says I, "I don't know. I've come far, but you've got to ask Taos how much farther we're going. Taos is matrimonial bent, and I'm sort of a bodyguard."

"Are you a cattleman?" she asks.

"You might say I am, ma'am," says I. "There is some cows back home."

"Do you know you remind me of William S. Hart?" she says. "You are just the type."

"Is William a printer?" I asks, but she shakes her head, and I notices for the first time that she's a blonde.

"No, he's an actor. A Western actor. Are you married?"

"No, ma'am. Nope, I'm still single-rigged. What's your name?"

She pauses for a minute, and then says—

"Aurora Metcalf."

"That's a huh—peculiar name," says I. "Mine's Brown—Yallerstone Brown."

"And you are single," says she, low-like. "Haven't you ever felt the call of love? The primal call of your heart for some one to share your life? Haven't you ever felt the need of a mate?"

"What does William Hart look like?" I asks.

"Like you. He makes love so wonderful, he's so daring. You really do resemble him in lots of ways. You should see him make love."

"Uh-huh," says I. "He likely gets paid a lot for it. You've got to take that into consideration."

"Would you make love for a consideration?"

"Well," says I, "every man has his price, ma'am."

"Would you—would you marry me—for a consideration?"

Of all the danged fool propositions I ever had handed to me she had the worst. She says to me—

"In the first place I don't want to get married."

So I says:

"*Keno.* Neither do I."

I meant it, too. She ain't the kind of a clinging vine that I wants around my cabin door, 'cause I can just see that she'd make a man miserable. Well, she sort of settles in her seat, and this is her proposition—

"Do you know what an exclusive set is?" she asks.

"I do," says I, "'Dice' Davidson had one. Roll seven all night."

"My uncle, James Alexander Carter, thinks that Western men are the only real male human beings on earth," says she. "I have never seen my uncle. He is my father's brother, and when father died Uncle James inherited me and Aunt Mary. We own a home, and uncle has paid all the expenses for years. He owns some valuable mines out West—where I don't know. The money comes every month, through a lawyer, and Uncle James is almost a myth.

"Now he says that I must marry a Western man or lose my inheritance when he dies, and it must be before the first of the year, as he is going to make us a visit. In case I don't marry a man from the West, and one that he approves of, the money will all go to a home for indigent prospectors. Do you understand?"

"I begin to see a glimmer of light," says I. "Suppose he didn't like me—where do I get off?"

"No one could be more of a type than you are," says she. "He will be delighted."

"I don't want no wife," says I.

But she says:

"You won't have one—except in name. I'll send for him to come right out to visit us, and as soon as he is gone I will pay you one thousand dollars, let you go back West, and get a divorce as soon as possible. Why you won't even have to marry me under your real name. Will you do it? You see, uncle says he won't stand for a husband from my set. Will you marry me?"

Just then Taos drifts into the door, reading a prospectus of some railroad, and I taps him on the shoulder.

"Taos," says I, "meet the future Mrs. Yallerstone Brown."

The cigaret falls out of his mouth, and he shakes hands with the lady's elbow.

"Nice day, ma'am," says he, and drags

me into the next car. "Yallerstone," says he, "are you crazy?"

"Maybe."

"You going to marry her?"

"Uh-huh."

"——! You just met her!"

"She just met me, too, Taos."

"Well," says he, weak-like, "you're the suddenest son-of-a-gun I ever met. I'm sorry, old trailer."

"Maybe I will be too," says I. "Remains to be seen, as the feller said when he dug into the Injun's grave. She's likely as good as I am, and she's old enough to know better if she thinks she's doing wrong."

Taos grunts and rolls a smoke.

"How soon?"

"Chicago," says I, and he puffs away for a while before saying anything. Then he sort of shrugs his shoulders and says:

"Well, Yallerstone, I hate to hear about it, but I reckon it's fate. I'll be back in Chicago in about a week, and I'll meet you."

"Bring Box 1234 with you, Taos. My wife will be glad to meet her."

I can't imagine Taos with a wife, but—well, look at me.

TAOS CHANGES trains at Chicago, and he shakes hands with me and Aurora. He tells us where to meet him in a week, and then leaves. Aurora is some sudden herself. She rushed me to a place where you send telegrams, and from there to—I reckon it was the court-house or the city hall, and then shoved me into a taxes cab and we went to the preacher's house.

It took that sad-faced Jasper about a minute to put hobbles on my freedom, and we didn't no more than get out of that place before she starts educating Yallerstone Brown. I never knowed that I was so ignorant. She starts in on eating with a knife, and ends the first lesson with a sermon on putting my feet on the table.

She orates that I'm to be sober, shaved and sanitary all the time. She chases me into a store and slides me into a suit of clothes that looks like I was dressed for a funeral, and then I has to trade my perfectly good boots for a pair of shiny shoes with buttons on. Then she bought me a cane.

"I ain't crippled—yet," says I.

"You carry that cane!" says she. "One doesn't have to be crippled to carry a cane."

"One end or the other," says I. "Can I keep my gun?"

"Gun? Certainly not! You'll put it in the bag."

"Bag?" I asks. "If I've got to pack a cane I ain't going to have no bag. Folks might think I was a chicken thief."

Right there I found out what a bag is. We got into a cab, and when we got out we're at the depot.

"Two tickets to Hillsdale," says she to the ticket-man.

"Hillsdale?" I croaks.

"Where we will live," says she.

"Amarilly would enjoy this," says I, after she got through telling me how to act when I got off the train.

"Amarilly?" she asks. "Who is she?"

"Friend of mine. Been with me over a year."

"Relative?" she asks.

"Nope, no relative."

"You—you haven't been really with her, have you?" she wails. "Not all that time?"

"Yes'm. Me and her has taken some goshawful trips together."

She sort of shudders deep into her seat, and then—

"We'll speak of her later, and I will demand an explanation of your associations with her, Mr. Wardner."

"Wardner?" says I. "My name's Brown!"

"The name on the license is Jack Wardner. I don't like the name of Brown, and I told you I'd marry you under an assumed name."

"Oh!" says I. "Nice name; where did you find it?"

"I read it in a Sunday paper once. It was an article about a Jack Wardner, who was a famous rustler in Montana. It must have been a typographical error, or the word rustler is a derivation of our word hustler. Don't you think so, Jack?"

"Yes, I don't. You might as well have said Harry Tracey or Jesse James. Suppose I get slammed into jail, and languish in durance vile."

"Jail?" says she, and then she climbed my morals and language, rode me wild and free and slapped me with her hat.

She raked me from headstall to flank, and when she quit I'm gentled aplenty. Also we're pulling into Hillsdale.

That platform is one mass of colored clothes, and I can feel that Yallerstone

Brown is getting sex-shy. The train jars to a stop, and a committee of females sure invades that car. They don't see nobody but my wife. I hears the word "telegram" and I know they've been notified. While the turmoil is in progress I opines to myself that I know I'm going to get embarrassed, so I shoves one leg out of the open window and hit the gravel on the other side.

I figure to go around that train and meet my wife on the other side, but there don't seem to be no other side. I walked about a mile with that bag and cane but there ain't no end to the cars. Then I takes my gun out of my bag, shoves it inside the band of my pants, and ditches both bag and cane.

Then all to once I finds an opening in the trains and I pilgrims right down a street. I sees a familiar sign over a door, so in I goes.

There at the bar stands a figure, dressed in a checkerboard suit, with his back turned toward me, talking to the bartender. On top of his head sets a green hard hat, with red hair sticking up around the edge like grass around a fence post. One freckled bunch of fingers holds a half-unwrapped cigar with which he gestures widely, as he says:

"Yessir, he was a hy-iu pard but he fell for a female charmer. I'm all to blame, 'cause I was the one what got him to travel, and I shall have it on my conscience for many a day and night. Well, Bartender, fill 'em up and we'll drink to the best old ——"

"Old what?" I asks, and Taos turns so quick that his hat falls off, and he sets down hard on the rail.

I looks him over, picks up that miscolored hat and blows the dust off the top.

"You married yet, Taos?" I asks.

He looks up at the bartender and motions toward me:

"Bartender, do you see the same thing that I do? Tell me your impression."

"Seven feet high, horse face and——"

"That's aplenty," says Taos, getting up. "Yallerstone Brown, have a drink. Are you married?"

I takes about what would fill one of Amarilly's ears, and nods:

"I am. Are you?"

"I begs pardon, gentlemen, but I'm looking for a Mr. Wardner," says a voice at the door, and we turns around to see a little feller in knee panties, and wearing the most dignified face we ever seen. We looks at him and then at each other.

"I repeats," says he, "I am looking for Mr. Wardner."

"Does you know this frozen-faced tip-up, Bartender?" asks Taos, but the hooch-handler shakes his head.

"I was sent to direct 'im 'ome," says the little one, dignified-like.

Dog-gone him, he ain't changed expression since he came in.

"He's a director," grins Taos. "Have a drink?"

"Beg pardon, sir, but Mrs. Wardner wishes——"

"Sounds like a fairy tale," says Taos. "They used to have three wishes."

"Beg pardon, sir, but she's frantic, sir."

"Taos," says I, "shall we kill it outright or put it in pickle?"

"I begs pardon, sir—" begins the little one, when Taos grabs him by the shoulder.

"What's your name, feller?"

"Hicks, sir."

"Have a drink, Hicks?"

"No, sir. Not any, if you please——"

"Whisky or something stronger?" asks Taos.

I've see teetotalers who were as big as a house cave right in and drink themselves under the table when Taos asked them that question in just his own way.

"Mostly anything, sir," says Hicks, after one look at Taos' eyes.

I can say right here that all Hicks needed was a start.

"Never 'ad so much fun in all me bloomin' life," says Hicks, tearful-like, after about the seventh. "I never 'ad any fun in me blawsted life before. I got the limersine outside it you wants to go some place."

"Where can we see the most, Hicks?" asks Taos.

"Whitehalls, sir. Like to go? I ain't never 'ad no fun in me——"

"Maybe I better find my wife," says I. "You fellers don't know Aurora like I do."

"Gol dang, I plumb forgot her," says Taos. "Where is she, Yallerstone? Leave her in Chicago?"

"Aurora ain't the kind you can leave places, Taos," says I. "When I married Aurora Metcalf I got a cross between a range-boss and a first mate, if you asks me."

HICKS is leaning against the bar, with tears of sympathy for himself running down his face. Now he stops sobbing and says—

"Wha' did you shay your wife's name wash?"

"Aurora Metcalf."

"The one you lately married?" he asks.

"I never married but one lately, and she's it, Hicks."

"Blyme!" says Hicks, staggering toward the door. "Blyme, I've woozled the whole bloomin' mess! Picked the wrong pershon. Now I'll get —— from the missus." And Hicks weaved out of the door.

"Wardner!" exclaims Taos. "Wonder who he is?"

Just then I remembers, and I starts to laugh.

"I'm him," says I. "My wife married me under a alias, Taos. She don't like the name of Brown so she changed it to Jack Wardner."

"Jack Wardner? Does she know anything about Jack Wardner?"

"Read about him in a paper, Taos. Didn't she pick some name?"

"Beyond the shadder of a doubt. Jack Wardner lifted half the cows in Mescal County, and had the sheriffs in that country setting on cactus for a year or two. I'd 'a' sure picked some other name."

"Me too," says I. "But when Aurora starts picking—well, I got it."

"Do you know where you live?" he asks.

"I do not. I've got to find her or get thunder."

We had a few more drinks, and then we starts down the street. Taos suggests that we ask a policeman, which we do.

"No," says he. "Never heard of the name around here."

The next one has the same answer.

"Reckon we'll have to make a house to house canvass, Yallerstone," says Taos, and just then a feller comes up to us and says—

"Are either of you gents Jack Wardner, the Montana cowman?"

"One of us must be," admits Taos. "We're looking for the wickiup of one named Aurora Metcalf. Ever heard of her?"

"Aurora?" he asks.

"Same as Northern Lights," says I. "Last name is Metcalf."

"Never heard of her," says he. "Live around here?"

"This is Hillsdale, ain't it?" I asks, and he nods.

"You ain't a officer of the law, are you?" asks Taos, and the feller laughs.

"No, I am a society reporter. We have the story of the wedding in the paper this afternoon, but I want to get an interview with Mr. Wardner on the vast herds he controls and all that."

"Vast herds!" snorts Taos. "Did you ever have vast herds, Yal—Jack?"

"One unit," says I. "Bought and paid for, and killed to make a Dawson County barbecue."

"Your wife said that you were the greatest hustler that the State of Montana ever knew, and that you were strong enough to lift any cow in the State."

Me and Taos looks foolish-like at each other, and then Taos takes me by the arm.

"Somebody's crazy, Yallerstone," says he. "Let's me and you get away from here."

We left him gawping at us and went around a corner, where we sat down on the sidewalk and rolled a smoke.

"Strangers in a stranger land," sighs Taos.

"Did you write to Box 1234?" I asks, and he nods.

"Yep, but I ain't heard from it yet."

"Keep away from the post-office," says I. "Shun anything that might lead your feetsteps toward the altar, Taos. Look at the mess I'm in."

Just then a shiny automobile rolls up to where we're setting and we looks up at the driver. It's Hicks.

"I'm still 'untin'," says he, sad-like. "I don't believe Miss Carter ever 'ad a 'usband. Blyme, if I does."

"——!" says Taos. "This must be a matrimonial mill. Has she got a husband?"

"She thinks she 'as," says Hicks, confidential-like. "I ain't been 'ome since I left you. I've 'unted and 'unted."

"Maybe he's out at Whitehalls, Hicks," I suggests.

"Want to ride out and see, sir?"

"Of course not," says Taos. "We're busy, Hicks. We've got a lot of work to do today. How do you get into this gas greenhouse?"

Whitehalls was some place for to see. The king of spades let us in the door, and the jack of the same suit led us to a table. He didn't want to serve drinks to Hicks, but Taos spoke softly to the waiter, and Hicks got served ahead of us.

We've been there about two quarts when a fat feller comes to the side of our table, and stares at Hicks. I figured he must be the boss of the place, so I asked him to have a drink.

"Hello, shour face," whoops Hicks.

"Hicks, you are discharged," says he, and then he looks at us. "If either of you gentlemen is Mr. Wardner I can say that your wife is waiting for you."

"Which one of us is him?" asks Taos, and Hicks shakes his head.

"Please," says fatty. She's prostrated."

"Slipped?" asked Taos. "Gosh A'mighty, Yallerstone, she's accidented!"

"Hicks," says I, "we're going home."

"Never 'ad no fun in my bloomin' life," weeps Hicks. "Never 'ad——"

"Please," says fatty, "let the rest stay, and I'll take you home."

"Who in —— do you think is running this here party?" I asks. "Who are you?"

"Butler," says he, dignified-like.

"Good!" says Taos. "Butler, you drive the hack." And he took fatty by the arm and hustled him outside.

"Get up on that seat and show us speed," orders Taos. "You do some driving, old-timer, or I'll shoot the pockets out of your panties."

"Haw!" whoops Hicks, when the hack started with a jerk. "Goo' joke! Shour face never drove limershine——"

Just then the front end of that million-dollar hack went up in the air, and we rattled around like three dice in a box. Then comes the first total eclipse I ever seen, and I ain't got no smoked glass. I woke up after a while and finds that I've got my feet up a tree. Taos' feet are sticking out of one of the hack windows.

"Blyme," wails a familiar voice on the other side of the fence, "the missus will be sore as a bloomin' boil! Limersheen all 'ammered to ——!"

I pulled Taos out of the hack and spread him out on the ground. He shudders after a while and looks up at us.

"Yallerstone," says he, soft and sweet, "she was only a passenger." And then he sort of shakes his head and says, "Yallerstone, did we meet Aurora?"

"Not so bad as that," says I. "Butler must have been a hurdle-rider in his youth. Are you hurt, Hicks?"

"Hurt ——!" wails Hicks. "I'm heart-sick."

I hunted around in the busted hack until I finds a bottle of silver lining, which I passes around to those assembled. When we got lined a little, we all locks arms and started down the road. We don't see nothing of Butler, so we figures that he ain't come down yet.

"Hicks," says Taos, "do you know any good songs?"

" 'Bringing hin the Sheaves,' sir."

"This ain't no farmers' convention, Hicks," says I. "Let's all sing 'Old Man Lute was a gol darn brute and he couldn't get his cattle up the gol darned chute.' "

"What was the matter with the cow—scared?" asks Hicks, and then he says, "Right around the next corner is 'ome, so we better act dignified."

"This ain't home is it?" asks Taos, peeking over the fence. "This here is a hotel, Hicks."

"The Wardner residence, sir," says Hicks. "This is the 'ome of Miss Agnes Carter, daughter of the minin'-man, Mr. James Alexander Carter."

Me and Taos looks foolish-like at each other, and then all takes the last drink out of the bottle.

"Wrong again, Hicks," says I. "I never married her. I married Aurora Metcalf, Hicks. Know any Metcalfs around here?"

"No, sir. No Metcalfs in Miss Carter's set, sir."

"My gosh!" grunts Taos. "They come in sets here, Yallerstone."

TAOS is gazing toward the house, and we all looks. Up the walk staggers Butler, and right into the midst of a herd of females. They seem to hang on to him while he pours out his soul. He still retains one coat sleeve and one pant leg, but his nerve is all gone.

Then a couple of males breaks from the herd, lopes away to where an automobile is standing, and away they goes up the road. The rest help Butler into the house.

"S'whelp me, he told 'er about the limerseen!" wails Hicks. "Now I ain't got no more job than a bloomin' canary bird."

"That's hard lines," says Taos. "Our fault too, Hicks. Let's go up and square things for Hicks, Yallerstone."

We went up and sat down on the porch.

"You do the talking, Yallerstone, and me and Hicks will back you up; eh, Hicks?"

"Jack! You!"

We turns around quick-like, and there stands Aurora, backed up by a whole swarm of females.

"Hicks," says I, "you'll never regret what you've done for me. You sure are some guide, I'd tell a man."

"Brought 'im 'ome, ma'am," says Hicks, foolish-like.

"Jack, where have you been?" wails Aurora.

"Ask Hicks," says Taos. "Hicksie knows, eh, Hicks?"

"You!" Aurora looks just like a panther that I cornered in a blind cañon once over on the Tillicum River. She sure shows displeasure toward Taos. "You — er — thing!"

"Yes'm," says Taos, "I don't blame you, ma'am, but you ought to go out West and learn to cuss."

"West!" she snorts. "I hate it! Jack, what will people think? I've even had the police looking for you."

"That's nothing," says I. "You might introduce me to the ladies."

"This is Jack Wardner, of Montana," says Taos, "owner of vast herds. I am Taos Thompson. I was born in a canebrake and rocked in a bark cradle, and I'm the pizenest old pelican that ever made a track in the sand. Whale-bone warp and bob-cat filling. Let me make you used to Hicks who never had any fun in his blooming life. Me and Jack has done the best we can toward him."

"Jack," snaps Aurora, "take that person away, will you? Hicks, take them up to Mr. Wardner's rooms. Jack, I should think you'd be ashamed. Change your clothes at once."

"Amarilly would love to see you now, old-timer," grins Taos. "I can just see her broken ear stand straight up."

"Broken ear?" asks a lady. "Broken ear?"

"Yes'm," nods Taos. "She loves Jack, and he loves her, but one day she got too rambunctious and Jack hit her over the head with a pick-handle. But she don't show no grudge—Amarilly don't. She kissed us both good-by. You go on up and sluice off a little, Jack. I'll wait here."

"Come on," says I. "There's two basins, ain't there?"

"Bawth, sir?" asks Hicks, after he takes us to a room that has got the New York hotel in Rawhide beat a mile for looks.

"No," says I. "Not before Saturday."

Taos is examining some clothes which are laid out on the bed, and then he turns.

"Hicks, who owns them duds?"

"Mr. Wardner, sir. Mrs. Wardner 'ad me get them. I 'opes they fits, sir."

"Got any more like 'em, Hicks?"

"No, sir. No more, sir—unless I might be so bold as to offer you a suit of mine, sir."

"Hicks, I'd love you as a brother," grins Taos, and does a bear dance around Hicks.

Hicks comes back in a few minutes with his arms full of clothes.

"May I dress you now, sir?" he says.

"Hicks," says I, "I was wearing suspenders and dressing myself when you was keeping yours up with a safety-pin. Vamoose!"

Then me and Taos sets down on that bed and whoops a few lines.

"Yallerstone, I want a diagram of the whole situation," says Taos.

"Well," says I, "you can blame yourself. You dragged me out of a comfortable desert and away from a friendly jackass, and flung me into this proposition. She's got a uncle out West some place who proclaims that she's got to marry a Western man or lose her inheritance. *Sabe?* Otherwise his *dinero* goes to a home for indignant prospectors.

"You can see for yourself, Taos, that she ain't no Adonis to look upon. Aurora can't pick and choose, so she slams her pick into me, 'cause I'm a type. *Sabe?* She orates that all I've got to do is to marry her, be her hubby in appearance only, and hang around until James Alexander Carter shows up and departs, and then I get one thousand dollars, a safe passage back to the sage, while she sues me for dessert. She don't want a husband no more than I do, but she sure does covet her uncle's roll. According to her he must be a locoed old jigger."

"I wish we'd 'a' stayed back on the desert, Yallerstone," says he. "I ain't heard a word from Box 1234, and now I reckon I've got to go back to Rawhide alone."

"Stick around, Taos. Her uncle has been sent for, and after he's gone I'll slip you half that thousand. We're making expenses."

"Do you love her, Yallerstone?"

"No, I can't say that I do, Taos."

"Could you learn to love her?"

"Not at that price."

"I can't blame you, Yallerstone. Love comes from the heart. Wish I hadn't held up that stage. That sure was one angel, old-timer. She told me she hoped to see me hanged, and when I gave her back her watch and locket she commuted it to life imprisonment. Wish I knowed how to get into these clothes, Yallerstone."

I looks mine over and has the same feelings. A blue-print might help a lot, but there ain't even a recipe in sight.

In the first place the person who made them pants didn't have me in mind. They're all right, except that they don't come all the way down the leg, and the top button laps plumb around to my hip where I has to pin it. Taos says I looks twisted, but they covers me plenty. I manages to get that shirt fastened at the top. There's buttonholes all the way down the front but no buttons, and every time I bend over I open up like an envelope. I tries the coat and finds it guilty. She don't meet in front by twelve inches. There's a medicine-show actor's hat there, and a cane, but I ain't got no drugs to sell, and I ain't got no sprained ankle, so I passes both.

I admires myself in a glass and then looks at Taos. He never considered Hicks when he borrowed that suit. That suit fits Taos like a bandage on a Christmas tree. The pants are too tight to go outside of his boots, so he wears them inside. The sleeves are about six inches too short, which gives a hy-iu view of Taos wrists and hands. I found a pocket in the tail of that coat which will just hold a Colt .45. It hauls the collar away from my neck quite a lot, but don't interfere none to speak of.

"Yallerstone," says he, "all I need is some cologne to make me a regular honkatonk actor. You look like ——, Yallerstone Brown."

"You don't favor Venus none to speak about," says I. "If anybody asks me I'd say you was something to scare kids with."

We sneaked out in the hall, and I peeks over the railing of the stairs. I seen a lot of folks standing around down there, so I back right into Taos. Just then Hicks came along, and I says to him—

"Ain't it awful, Hicks?"

Hicks looks us over and says:

"Yes, sir. You should 'ave let me dress you."

I peeks down again, and here comes my wife. She's dressed like Summer at the Equator. She hustles us around the corner and says—

"Jack Wardner, I want to tell—my Heavens, who dressed you?"

"Who undressed you?" I asked.

She looks me over for a moment, and then:

"Oh, what tangled webs we weave. Jack, my name is not Aurora Metcalf. I am Agnes Carter. I just gave you the first name that came into my head, because I never thought it would lead to this. It wasn't much worse than marrying you under the name of Jack Wardner. Thank the Lord, it won't be for long."

"Amen," says Taos.

Aurora gives him a hard look and says to me:

"Jack, you must get rid of your friend. I will have to stand for one Westerner, but not for two. This is not a hotel."

"Yes'm," says Taos, sad-like. "The more I see of the gentle sex around here the more I love Amarilly."

THEN we went down-stairs. The bunch stands up to greet us, and I met more folks right there than there is in the town of Rawhide, if you count greasers and dogs. My wife smiles with her mouth, and we all hits the trail for the feed-room.

A big, tall female hooks on to Taos, and he acts like he enjoyed it. Him and her sets down across from me and Aurora, and on my other side is a fat little female with a lot of yaller hair on top of her head, and not much clothes on above the table top.

We got soup without ordering it, and I immediate and soon digs into the stuff. I love soup, and I'm some hungry. That yaller-haired person sets there like a statue, and I'm just about to tell her that if she don't want her soup I'll take it, when I glances across at Taos. He's staring at the lady and pouring sugar into his soup. He puts every lump in sight into that soup and then starts stirring it with his finger.

I leans across the table and says, low-like:

"Taos! You ain't at 'Enchilada' Charley's place now, remember."

He sort of gives me a queer look and fusses with the napkin in his lap. He stares back at the lady and then shoves back his chair.

"Ex-cuse me!" he sort of gasps. "I—I don't feel well." And then he starts away from the table.

Something rattled, somebody squeaks, and the dishes start crashing on the floor. Taos has made a misdeal with the napkin and has tucked the tablecloth into the waistband of his pants.

Did he stop to unhitch? He did not. I heard a door slam, and we all set there looking like a lot of Digger Indians.

"Heavens above!" exclaims my wife. "What happened?"

"That was he!" screeches the fat little blonde, throwing up both hands.

"I knew it! I—I——" And she slid down under the table.

I hauled her out and braces her into a chair, while everybody tries to pour water on her. Several used soup.

Just then Hicks comes in and whispers to my wife:

"Pardon, ma'am, but there is somebody on the telephone who insists that they must talk with you. They insists, ma'am."

Just then the yaller-haired lady comes out of it, and my wife beats it out of the room.

Everybody is fanning the lady and asking questions, and she just sets there and gulps and makes fool motions with her hands.

I just slides my old coat-tail around to where I can hook the butt of that .45, and waits for what is to happen next.

Then my wife comes over to me and says:

"Very queer. The call was from somebody who wanted to know if you were really the original Jack Wardner, of Montana. He said he wanted you—I don't know what for. I—I told him I was the maid, and he said, 'Well, you keep this under your hat.' Isn't it awful what a mess has been made of this dinner?"

"Did he say he was coming up here?" I asks. She says:

"Yes, I guess he wants to surprize you, Jack. Who do you suppose it is?"

"I know," says I. "It's a secret. I'll go an' meet him. Ex-cuse me."

I grabbed a hat off the hat-rack, and I traveled half-way to the depot before I finds that I've got one of them high, shiny ones.

There is a train just leaving, and I hooks the last coach as it pulls out. I turns around, tips my hat to Hillsdale, and sails that hat as far as I can. I walks inside and meets the conductor.

"I ain't got no ticket for my ride or sleep," says I, "but I've got the *dinero*. Do I get along?"

"You do." He hauls out a slip of paper, and says, "I've got one upper left, but maybe tomorrow I can do better."

"I don't mind being a bird for one more night," says I and lets the porter send me up the ladder.

The next morning I shoves my face out of the curtains to see what the chances are to come out and dress, when I happens to look down into a familiar face.

"Honeymoon?" he asks.

"Honey ——! What did you stampede for? Was that Box 1234?"

"Nope. That was the lady I held up, Yallerstone. She never forgot me, I reckon, and I saw life imprisonment in her eyes. Things might have been different. You married Box 1234."

I hauls myself half-way out of the bunk and stares at him—

"Box 1234!" I yelps.

He nods.

"I seen it in that paper, Yallerstone. I took you back there to try and marry you off to her, 'cause I knowed you was honest, and—well, I didn't want her to marry a heart and hand Westerner. I wish I hadn't held up that stage."

"Why did you?" I asks.

"Well, I told the owners of the line that my clean-ups wasn't protected enough, and they laughed at me, so I held her up to prove that I was right."

"And your right name is?"

"James Alexander Carter, Yallerstone, but I prefers Taos Thompson."

I looks down at him for a while and then relapses in my bunk.

Pretty soon I hears him say:

"I kind o' wish you had stuck, Yallerstone. She didn't play square with me, but—well, you'd 'a' made her a honest husband, and you wouldn't 'a' had to work no more. Why didn't you stick a while?"

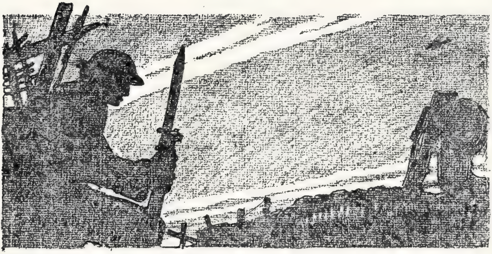
"Well," says I, sticking my head down close to his curtain, "just after you left, Taos, somebody—a officer, I reckon, called my wife on the telephone and asked her if I was the original Jack Wardner from Montana. She said I was, and he told her to keep it under her hat 'cause he was coming up to surprize me."

"Shucks, Yallerstone! You could 'a' stuck for all that. You could easy prove you ain't."

"Not if they took me back to Mescal County," says I.

"Mescal County!" he snorts, clawing at the curtains. "What do you mean, Yallerstone?"

"I'm Jack Wardner," says I.



# In the Dark

### by L. J. Montross

THERE are a few men to whom the darkness is the best time for important undertakings, to whom the shroud of the night gives a mental grasp and quickness of nerve reaction that withers under the light of day or beneath the glare of an incandescent lamp.

It is not that there is anything wrong with their eyesight. On the contrary, their vision is often better than normal—but the normal eyesight deceives its owner in time of need.

If you don't believe that, interview twenty people who have just seen an exciting event in broad daylight. You will find no two of their descriptions alike. Nineteen—maybe twenty—of these persons who used their normal eyesight in the light of day have seen wrong.

Silky O'Mullin is one of these few individuals who would rather depend upon senses sharpened by black darkness than upon his eyes in the most penetrating light. In all his long career, so Silky has told me, he has met but one other man who was thus blessed—or afflicted, as you will—and that man is the best friend that he has.

If you could hear Silky tell it, you wouldn't have the least doubt but that he would cheerfully give up his life for this friend—yet Silky doesn't even know whether the man is blond or dark, what sort of features he has or what the other details of his appearance are.

For he has never seen him! At least, that is the way that I would put it, considering that Silky and his friend have never been face to face in broad daylight, as other friends meet each other.

"Yes, I *have* seen him," is the answer Silky would give, if he were the sort of man to put his sacred thoughts into words. "I have looked upon his naked soul. For it is only in the darkness that a man's soul is visible to me. In the daytime I see but his appearance and am seldom able to give an accurate description of that afterward."

This intense love of the night which was born into Silky O'Mullin may have been what caused him to take up a life of crime. Certainly it was what nursed along his notorious career of lawbreaking, although Silky, who had read much philosophy during his various terms in prison, always denied it.

"No," said Silky; "I had the gross stupidity to believe myself more clever than the rest of society, and the laziness to foster a criminal ambition."

It was more than thirty years ago that the name of Silky O'Mullin first appeared on a police docket. It has seldom been free from suspicion since then, up until three months ago. Thus it must seem strange to Silky to be able to walk the streets without seeing shadows dodging from doorway to doorway on the other side. But the department at last believes that he is at last running straight, that he is just plain John O'Mullin, twenty-dollar-a-week clerk, who will end his days in that prosaic occupation.

And the department's mighty glad of it! The quiet, even morose Silky O'Mullin cracked some of the strongest safes, stole thousands and outwitted the cleverest plain-clothes men.

When he was captured he had one peculiarity that made him notorious in the criminal annals of the country. From the day that he was arrested until the day he was sent to prison or released he never spoke one word, not even in his own behalf.

One jailer once told me positively that during the four months Silky was in a cell awaiting trial for the robbery of the Cadwell Avenue Bank he did not open his lips for a single word of speech. He made no friends. He trusted no man but himself, and scarcely trusted himself except in the dark.

But John O'Mullin is a hard-working old fellow who pays his bills and goes to bed of nights. There's only one similarity between Silky O'Mullin and John O'Mullin—they both love the darkness.

In order to explain things, just as Silky explained them to me, it's necessary that I go back to a topic that may be disagreeable. I refer to those times when we had breadless and meatless days and—worst of all—had to read war stories. We rather liked them then, but now——

Well, stay with me a while and I'll make it short.

IN THE early Spring of 1918 the newspapers told the story of the Graves and Graves Trust Company robbery in bigger head-lines than they gave to the war stuff. Why not? The vaults had been cracked right under the nose of half a dozen guards and forty thousand dollars taken.

The first question that the Big Chief, which was the underworld nickname for the head of the police department, asked was:

"Where's Silky? Drop everything else and get him."

An hour later Silky strolled in with about ten witnesses and gave himself up. Silky was silent—the witnesses did all the talking. They proved that Silky had just got out of Joliet and had reformed, that he had been working on the night of the robbery and could account for every minute of his time. The Big Chief had his own opinion of things, but had to release Silky for lack of evidence.

And then the fact that the money was found hidden in an alley that day helped to quiet things. That was Silky's toughest piece of luck, hiding that swag there and then having some fool junk-peddler stumble on to it!

"Silky," the Big Chief said, when he saw that he had to let him go, "we've got our hands full running down spy cases. We haven't got any time to be bothering with you. Unless you want to matriculate for another degree at Joliet pretty soon—well, see that recruiting-station sign?"

Silky saw it. When the Big Chief talked in that tone of voice he had to see it.

So now you know why it was that the erstwhile Silky O'Mullin found himself in a trench ten miles hellward from Amiens, France, in August, 1918, attired in a gas-mask and tin hat, and answering to the name and address of Private Henry Johnson, Company C, 91st Infantry, A. E. F.

As a soldier Silky had been more or less of a joke, principally more. He had never been able to adapt muscles softened by forty-six years of crime and prison life to the up-and-down, back-and-forth of training camp. He was silent and surly to his fellows in the company, most of whom were twenty years younger.

But when it came to the real fighting—well, the old Croix de Guerre is still in Silky's trunk. The scrapping, you see, was done mostly in the dark.

When the news came of the capture of Chipilly Ridge up on the Somme by a bunch of Yanks and Australians I was one of those who polished the old buttonhole flag and yelled:

"Great stuff! Wish I'd been there!"

But I suppose that I'd have changed my mind if I had been on that twenty-hour hike that Silky tells me about.

"Up hills, up more hills," growls Silky in reminiscence. "All France must run to a peak somewhere in the direction that you're going. And a fighting-pack weighs up heavy."

Four o'clock in the afternoon it was when Silky's company went over the top. By six they had reached the objective. At nine they were dug in.

That is Silky's laconic account of the engagement, but the newspapers, as you'll remember, came out with two and three column stories. Silky's company alone lost two-thirds of its personnel in those two hours. At midnight they selected Silky to go out and establish a listening-post.

"You've got cat-eyes, I think," the captain told him. "Somebody's got to do it, and you're the somebody."

Silky crawled out on his belly for half a mile or so. It was a dark night, so he felt at home with the task. After a cautious reconnaissance he made his way toward a high cliff that overlooks the deep valley of the Somme, knowing that the enemy must have left something there in the way of trenches or dugouts. Just as he had thought, he found a place that was suited for his purpose.

Until a six-inch shell from the barrage had landed there it had been an enemy dugout. After that event it was still a fairly good shelter but with a gaping hole in the end facing the enemy lines. With his bayonet cautiously feeling a way in front of him, Silky started to enter the narrow, cave-like door.

"Who are you?"

The words—the challenge of the British forces—were spoken in a peculiar, husky, nasal drawl, the voice of a man who had been gassed.

"Only a Yank," Silky whispered, recognizing the Australian accent. "Put your steel down, Digger, and I'll climb in with you."

Why did Silky call his challenger "Digger" the moment he heard the accent? Well, that was a habit along that part of the front. Everybody called an Australian "Digger." It was a nickname which the Anzacs themselves used and prescribed.

And if you don't believe that the Australians were the best of the world's good fellows—well, ask some of the Americans who fought alongside the brawny gentleman with the belted blouse and the turned-up hat.

The Australian asked Silky a few more questions to make certain that he was an American and then allowed him to enter. The two lay down together on the damp floor of the dugout near the gaping hole facing the enemy trenches. The darkness in there was as opaque as soot.

"Rough going today, Yank?"

"All of that, Digger."

These were the first words that either of them had spoken, even though they had been beside each other for a full five minutes. Their whispers made a hollow echo in the dank dugout, the silence of which was punctuated only by the dripping of water from the roof.

After another long silence Silky found out that the Australian was out on the same mission that he was. They decided that two could operate in a listening-post as well as one, and that the place was the best in the Somme valley for the purpose.

That was the sum total of their conversation for the next four hours. It is not an exciting duty, this being on a listening-post, when one is accustomed to being out in the night.

Noises echo loudly in the narrow, rocky valley of the Somme, and the advance of an enemy patrol could easily have been detected by one of Silky's acuteness in the dark. The Australian seemed to possess the same peculiar faculty. It was even a fairly safe spot, considering the front at that time.

"Of course," says Silky, "there was occasional shelling and an enemy bombing-plane once in a while and a machine gun going at times, but that was all in the game."

Within two feet of each other it was so dark in the dugout that neither could see even the outline of the other's form. They were in a reclining position, the better for protection, on the incline leading to the ragged gap in the end of the ruined shelter.

"Cigaret, Yank?" the Australian whispered.

"Thanks, Digger."

No one out on a listening-post has any business smoking a cigarette. But an entire night without a few puffs is a long time to a man accustomed to his fag. It's worth the imminent risk of attracting the deadly attention of an enemy bombing-plane, whose keen eyes catch the faintest glow from the earth below.

The Australian went into the far corner of the dugout, lit a match and shaded the tiny flare with his steel helmet. Then Silky went over and lit his cigaret.

During the proceeding Silky caught a glimpse of the pink, transparent light between the Australian's fingers. That is as near as he ever came to seeing him.

Just before the first rays of dawn came to pale the ragged line of artillery fire far to the east of them the two prepared to leave. Silky took one direction, while the Australian went in the opposite to return to the trenches occupied by his battalion.

Neither of them asked if the other would be in the dugout the next night. Both knew!

THE Australian was waiting in a shell-hole outside when Silky arrived at the listening-post just fourteen hours later. Again they lay side by side on the clammy incline and passed the night together. Just as on the night before there were but few words spoken between them and most of these were commonplace monosyllables.

The shelling was heavy for a time and when one howling monster landed within a few feet of them, bursting with a jagged spray of steel and flame, Silky caught a fleeting glance of the seams in the burlap covering his companion's steel helmet. But Silky did not see his features. He did not wish to.

Each night after that, about the time that darkness enveloped the gloomy plain, the two met in the shell-hole near the listening-post. They remained on duty together until an hour or so before dawn.

But it was not until they had known each other about a week that either of them ventured on anything like intimate conversation. Then after an hour of silence one evening the Australian said—

"Aye, an' it's bleedin' queer, Yank."

Silky scratched his nose with a contemplative finger, but expressed no curiosity. So intensely dark was it in the dugout that he could not even see the hand moving back and forth a few inches from his eyes.

"'Ere we've been laying aside each other every night for a time, and it's so bleedin' black in 'ere that neither knows but what the other might be a bloomin' Chink."

Silky grunted an admission that such a thing might be possible. He noted with his usual intuition in the dark that there was just the slightest strained quality in the Australian's peculiar, husky voice.

"Or it might bleedin' well be," continued the Australian, "that a couple of blighters could be laying here and one of 'em might be——"

The Australian suddenly stopped talking, his breath dying away in a husky wheeze from his gas-blistered throat. With a cat-like suddenness both men sprang to their feet.

They faced each other in a tense crouch, the sound of the Australian's breathing echoing like sighs in the dank silence of the dugout. In the trenches several miles to the right a German machine gun rattled with a dull "put, put, put."

Silky spoke first. His peculiar intuition told him that two feet away in the opaque darkness the Australian's heavy Army automatic pistol was pointed at his head. He also knew that he had met a man who possessed the love and understanding of the dark as himself.

"Put your artillery away, Digger," he said quietly, "and I'll do the same. Plenty of war without us starting a new one."

A shell from an enemy six-inch gun swooped down like an express train screaming through air and landed with a mighty *crump* in the mud twenty feet outside. The ridiculous side of the affair appealed to the Australian and he laughed, a husky, wheezing laugh.

"As I was startin' to say, Yank," he said just as if there had been no interruption, "a bloke doesn't know what he's running up against. Now you never seen me. You laid beside of me a bleedin' week in this black hole, and you don't know but what I might be a man with a price on my head. And it might be——"

"That I was after the reward."

Silky finished the sentence for him.

"Well, I'm not. You've just got a case of nerves, Digger."

For long minutes the Australian lay with unseeing eyes straining at the darkness. The only sound in the dugout was the dripping of water from the roof.

"There's a lot of 'em what would say as I was a bloomin' fool for telling you this, Yank," he finally said; "but I was suspicious for some bleedin' reason. What would you say if you knew that you were talking to a man—say a man what's got his picture posted up in Melbourne with a notice under it—'£100 Reward?'"

"I'd say, Digger," said Silky slowly, "that accident might put birds of a feather in the same nest just as well as design."

"And what would be your blinkin' advice to a man what's in that fix, a man what won't find it convenient to go back to Aussie after the war and what might even get catched up in the king's uniform?"

"Nobody chases after a dead man," replied Silky tersely.

"You mean——"

The Australian stopped with a puzzled air, and then chased the echoes about the dugout with his wheezing laugh.

"You're bloomin' well right! And a bloke what's died for his bleedin' country—that gives his memory a good reputation."

"And after that man's dead, Digger," suggested Silky, tracing circles in the blackness with his pistol, "he might work as a stevedore or something and even get over to the States. Best place in the world for a man to start things over again—if he's dead as far as Aussie is concerned. But——"

"You're bleedin' right," interrupted the Australian. "He's got to be *beaucoup* dead. Got a knife with you, Yank?"

Silky drew his bayonet from its scabbard on the back of his pack and handed it to the Australian. Even in the dense darkness the latter's hand grasped it just as if he had seen it coming.

A moment later Silky received the bayonet back and with it a round identification-disk with a piece of cord attached. Silky carefully put the disk in his pocket. He knew the ruse that Digger had in mind, and was prepared to do his part in carrying it out.

Identification-tags, as used by both the Australian and American forces, come two on a string to be worn about the neck. In case of the wearer's death in battle, the tags are to be taken from the deceased by the man finding the body. One of them is for the purpose of marking the grave. The other is sent to the Army records office as evidence of the man's death. The Australian, then, was relying upon Silky to turn in one disk as "proof" of his death, while he went out to prepare his own "grave" and mark it with the other disk.

Satisfied that his pal knew what was expected, the Australian crawled out into the night. A moment later Silky could hear him wheezing just outside the dugout in accompaniment to the sound of a trench-spade crunching through the gravel soil. After a time the noise ceased.

TWO hours later the first streaks of dawn were beginning to appear in the east. Silky crawled out of the dugout. But instead of taking his usual trail for the trenches occupied by his battalion he went a few yards to the right and stopped in front of an object which loomed up ghostly against the murky horizon. It was a fresh mound of earth crowned with a rifle, the bayonet of which was stuck to the hilt in the ground. On top of the rifle hung a steel, burlap-covered helmet, a belted blouse and an identification-disk. Silky chuckled long and silently.

After sending along the Digger's duplicate disk to the right people, Silky got back to his company just in time to hear plans being made and men being picked for a daylight raid on the enemy's trenches which was to be conducted that morning. He was chosen as one of the forty to start on the hazardous expedition. Silky has never told much about the events of that morning, but the citation accompanying the Croix de Guerre that he received for his share in the fighting reads:

> Private Henry Johnson, with utter contempt for danger, attacked an enemy machine-gun outpost single-handed, dispatching one of them with his bayonet and making three prisoners.

"Not so worse," said Silky in telling about it afterward, "considering that it was all pulled off in the daylight when a man's at a disadvantage."

But the medal wasn't all that Silky got. He received a ragged piece of shrapnel in his leg that morning, and was taken back in an ambulance. During the next four months he lay in a hospital at Blois. After he had begun to walk a little the surgeon examined him.

"The war's over as far as you're concerned," was his verdict. "Your leg's all right for parlor usage but it'll never stand the strain of infantry hikes again."

So Silky was sent back to the States to be invalided out of the service. It was only natural that he should come back to the city after his discharge from the Army. Even when Silky used to be dodging the detectives it was his boast that he never left the city.

You'll remember that when he first returned the newspapers made a lot over him. Several squads of camera men and sob writers met him at the station. A few hours later pictures of him appeared on the front pages along with stories telling how the "master criminal had cleansed his life in the redeeming fires of war."

Well, the newspaper sob writers may have thought so, but the Big Chief didn't.

"Silky," he growled after a couple of detectives had surprised that worthy in a hotel room and had brought him up to headquarters, "I've sent for you on the old principle that an ounce of prevention is better than a pound of cure. They'll never be able to make me believe any of that bunk about an old-timer like you being reformed.

"But we've got an entirely new stunt here that will do wonders for you. Just step in here."

Owing to the fact that four husky detectives were rendering more aid than was really necessary, Silky, who hadn't said a word during the entire proceeding, "stepped in" faster than he had intended or wanted to. The detectives pushed him into a small, bare room before a large individual in a policeman's uniform, with his features and even his hair concealed behind a heavy black mask.

"You're wise enough to know what this means, Silky," said the Big Chief. "This guy that's looking you over has got the original camera eye. He'll never forget you now that he's got one good double-O at you. But you'll never be able to recognize him when you meet him in plain clothes. You will rob another bank, will you?"

Silky kept his lips tightly compressed and said never a word. He did not intend to give the camera-eyed detective a chance to register his voice, too.

Silky told me afterward that he had really intended to live straight—until that day. Then the old criminal ego in him flared up, that desire to outwit society when the odds were against him. He made up his mind to rob one more safe—just one more to show the Big Chief that Silky O'Mullin could still get away with his old tricks.

But ostensibly Silky had reformed. One of the newspapers got him a job and advertised that fact to its own glory on the front page.

For two or three months the plain-clothes men trailed Silky and found him regular as a clock at his daily work. He was even seen spending his evenings in the public libraries or at mission meetings.

It wasn't long until no less than three denominations raised their voices to claim the honor of having shown the former lawbreaker the advantages of forsaking the primrose trail. Silky even threatened to become a society lion, several women's clubs having requested him to address them.

But all this time Silky was planning another robbery. He was planning in his old hidden way, the way that had always baffled the Big Chief.

For while Silky was never known to take any person into his confidence, yet he mysteriously found out things that were strange even to the department. Several of these facts that Silky learned from a source known only to himself were concerning the Goodrich Steel Company and the inner workings of its office.

Now the Goodrich Steel Company seldom has more than three hundred dollars locked in its office safe. Paying its thousands of workers is usually done through one of the large banks, and the fortune in greenbacks that makes up the payroll is at the office for only a few hours in the daytime. But when the strike threatened, when hundreds of men quit and demanded their wages, conditions changed. One night the office safe contained an amount running into five figures.

At ten minutes after one that night a guard with a rifle and automatic pistol stood watch over the safe. At fifteen minutes after one the guard was neatly trussed up like a fowl being prepared for a trip to market.

His own handkerchief was in his mouth as a gag, and his pistol and rifle had been carefully deposited on top of the safe. Everything had happened just when the guard was in the middle of a yawn.

From the corner where the huge safe was located could be heard faint clickings of steel tools working upon steel. There was no glow from a flashlight or dark-lantern showing—Silky preferred to do his work in black darkness. It was not five minutes until the trembling guard heard a ponderous creaking as the huge door of the safe swung open.

Silky stealthily filled his overcoat pockets with the packages of bills. Then his coat pockets. Then he put them into the front of his flannel shirt. He closed the safe door, turned the combination and glided out, closing the door behind him.

The room he entered was one of the handsome offices of the steel executives, as Silky could tell while cautiously feeling his way across it. He was just about to open the next door, which as he knew led into a stairway to the street, when——

Silky stopped. He stood absolutely

motionless. He had not heard a sound, but he had that queer sense of impending danger that had ever come to him as a sixth sense in the darkness.

The office clock slowly reeled off the seconds with its monotonous ticking. A mouse played about, rustling some papers on the floor. A street-car went past outside, and continued down the street until its clanging became faint in the distance. And still Silky stood there, stiffly poised on one foot, never moving a muscle.

Then he began stealthily drawing his pistol from his inside coat pocket, where he had put it when he closed the door. A tiny fraction of an inch at a time he pulled the weapon out. Then with a lightning-quick move Silky dodged.

He had just barely escaped the hurtling rush of an opponent who had not been more than five feet from him and had evidently been poising in the darkness just as he had. It was evident to Silky that he was pitted against a man whose senses were as sharp in the dark as were his.

After this rush the two jockeyed for position. Silky's peculiar intuition told him that the other man was gliding about like a cat closing in on a mouse. And Silky slipped from one corner to another, constantly keeping at what he felt to be the greatest possible distance from his opponent.

It was not a battle of brains dulled by much poring over books; it was a battle of primitive instincts dating back to a time when early man hunted his prey in the darkness. For even in the office cluttered with furniture neither of the two men gliding about for position stumbled against a chair or made the slightest noise.

Silky attempted a ruse, one that had won an escape for him several times in years past. Taking one of the packages of bills from his pocket with infinite pains to avoid any noise, he tossed it over into the other corner. This was to lure his opponent toward that direction and allow Silky to slip up behind him. But this man was different from any other whom Silky had encountered in the dark.

Instead of leaping toward the corner where Silky threw the package of bills, he caught the tiny sound made as they were tossed and hurled himself with a silent fierceness directly at the thrower. Silky escaped by a margin so narrow that he felt the heat of the other's breath.

Then Silky decided to go on the offensive. Stealing forward an inch at a time, he crept toward the center of the room. The other man, he instinctively felt, was coming directly toward him. The climax came with a deadly silence.

Silky felt the chill muzzle of an automatic pistol pressing against his cheek-bone just below the left eye. Within the very same second his own automatic was stopped by what he knew was a man's neck.

LIKE statues of rigid granite the two maintained their position while the office clock ticked seconds, each one of which dragged out into hours. Another street-car went past down below, and neither moved a muscle during the eternity while its clattering died away in the distance. The mouse began gnawing at a desk within a few feet of them, making a noise that sounded like the tearing of a buzz saw in the intense quiet. Then the other man spoke.

"Take that gun away!" he said in a calm, even voice in which there was just the suspicion of huskiness.

Silky obeyed instructions immediately and literally. He carefully slipped his pistol into his coat pocket. Then he chuckled.

"For a dead man you're a pretty good night watchman, Digger," he whispered.

The two men wasted no more time in words. They shook hands in a long, silent grip. Then Silky glided over to the corner and picked up the package of greenbacks he had thrown there a few moments before.

He took the rest of the money from his pocket and made a neat pile of it all on the table. Opening one of the drawers, he dropped his mask and automatic pistol into it.

"It's a bleedin' shame, Yank," slowly whispered the man standing motionless in the darkness beside him, "that I should be the bloke to—"

"After all it's my good luck, Digger," said Silky O'Mullin, opening the door that led to the stairs and noiselessly slipping out into the night.

# Useless *

### by George L. Catton

*Author of "Merely Brute," "For a' That," etc.*

HE SAT on a stone by the side of the road. His hair was long and thin and white. He said he was—

"Just thinking."

"Of what?" I asked.

He turned his faded blue eyes across the street, to where a crippled and distorted child sat with his hat in his hand begging alms, and answered—

"Useless folks."

I sat down beside him.

"Helpless cripples and the helplessly blind," he smiled gravely. "Those who are born lacking intelligence or who have, through some catastrophe in life, been robbed of it—all those who through inability must be dependent upon others for their very existence—they are called "useless." They toil not, nor spin; so in this age of work and progress men call them useless.

"But they are wrong, those men. In the divine plan there is nothing useless. Nothing exists but is ordained to some end. Listen."

He reached for his pipe and began to fill it. I waited. Then when his pipe was going good he began:

THEY called Benny Egan useless. Benny sat all day on the edge of a cliff-wall and poured sand in a hole. Nature hates a vacancy, and Benny was a child of Nature, one of God's innocents—witless.

Benny's father was the factor of a Hudson's Bay Company post. His mother was a breed-Indian squaw. His playmates, had he cared for playmates, would have been dogs. For human companionship was denied him.

White children within negotiable distance of the post there were none. The Indian and the breed-Indian children, like their superstitious parents, shunned him. Even the few white and near-white men who came to the post on business occasionally tapped their heads suggestively with their forefingers and turned their backs on him.

He wasn't a child, to be chirped at and clucked to and tossed up into the air. He wasn't an Indian, to cut wood and bring in meat and trap fur. He wasn't a dog, to be trained to harness for a sledge when the Winter came. He wasn't—wasn't anything. He was useless.

So he sat on the edge of the cliff-wall all Summer and poured sand in a hole. In the Winter months he crouched in a corner of the cabin by the big fireplace and eyed eternally, and vacantly, the leaping flames and the half-frozen ants in the wood-pile and the wagging of the tails of the dogs; but in the Summer, just the minute the snow was gone and the frost had left the ground, he wandered aimlessly to the edge of the cliff-wall and poured sand in a hole.

Then one day he passed out—slipped on

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* *This is an Off-the-Trail Story. See second contents page.*

the cliff-edge and pitched to his death. He was just thirteen years old that day.

They buried him; the Church did that. Back behind the Post in the soft ooze of a muskeg they dug a grave and marked it with a cross. Benny had lived thirteen years and died, for—nothing. All he had done in that thirteen years was pour sand in a hole. He was useless.

THE cross on Benny Egan's grave rotted away. But two roughly hewn slabs of wood spiked together, it couldn't last. The winds and the rains and the sun and the rending frosts of Winter disintegrated it. It fell to pieces. Twenty years after Benny Egan quit pouring sand in a hole in the edge of the cliff a crippled Indian built his fire with the last few shreds of the cross.

Joe, the crippled Indian was called—just Joe. No one knew his full name. Nobody bothered to ask him his full name. For Joe couldn't work; begged his living—was useless.

Joe had been crippled since he was a boy. A broken leg undoctored for weeks resulted in amputation and a crutch. Work, the only kind of work there was to be had in that district in those days, he couldn't do. Heavy manual labor requires two good legs. So Joe begged his living.

For twenty years Joe had begged his living. With no permanent abode he begged his food and prepared it over a fire in the bush. For twenty years he did that. And his last meal was cooked over a fire that he started with the last few shreds of the cross that marked the grave of Benny Egan.

Then when he had eaten of that last meal his movements became stealthy. For the last time in his life Joe was defying the laws of his country. The cooks in the lumber-camp on the little lake above him had refused him food; had cursed him for a useless beggar; and he was going to "get even." He hunted in his pack-sack and produced five sticks of dynamite.

The lumber company on the shore of the little lake above him had dumped thousands of feet of logs into the lake. When Spring came those logs would run on flood water the swift rapids of the creek and go down the river. But if the little lake was to find another outlet, if when the Spring floods came the creek was to remain dry, those logs would never leave the lake. And across that lake from the camps, where Joe was now, less than five feet of rock hemmed the water in.

Joe placed four sticks of the dynamite. He dropped the fifth. When the lake went out by its new outlet Joe's head and torso, all that remained intact, went out on its flood.

DAVE HOLLY found Joe's skull. Joe's head and torso lodged among a pile of boulders in the cañon and like the cross on Benny Egan's grave disintegrated. But the skull defied the elements. Dave Holly picked it up and examined its round smooth surface.

Dave was a returned soldier. Three years in France had turned him against indoor work, and his shattered nerves called for the peace and silence of the unpeopled places.

He was alone. He examined the skull for the cause of death and, finding none, glanced up to the top of the cliff. Then he dropped the skull.

He had thought it possible that the owner of that skull had fallen from the cliff. But now he was thinking of other things. He climbed to the top of the cliff.

An hour later Dave came back into the cañon and studied the face of the cliff. And as he studied his smile grew. He was begining to understand things. He had never been there before, but his studies in mineralogy told him that——

That once upon a time that huge slab of rock that lay athwart the cañon floor had been the face of the cliff. That once upon a time there existed a crack between that slab of rock and the present face of the cliff, and that frost—the irresistible force of freezing water—had split it off. That once upon a time there had been an outlet at the bottom of that crack but in some unaccountable manner it had become plugged with sand; and that in some unaccountable manner a small lake above had broken its confines and flooded the crack.

Then had come the Winter and the frost, and that huge slab of rock that once had been the face of the cliff had been torn off.

And now, exposed to the full view of the first man who came along—Dave Holly—was a broad seam of what Dave Holly had been looking for.

Dave Holly staked his claim.

I LOOKED up when the old fellow on the stone beside me stopped. Dave Holly was, I knew, the man who had discovered the Union Jack, the biggest producing gold-mine in the history of the north country.

"But," I ventured, "Dave Holly is—is useless, too. The excitement of his find finished his wrecked nerves and he is now hopelessly paralyzed."

"True," he nodded slowly. "But did you not see today's papers? Dave Holly has sold the Union Jack for eleven million dollars, and donated it all to the fund for the assistance of the war widows and orphans of Belgium."

# The Escape

## by Robert J Pearsall

*Author of "Ming Gold," "The Shu King," etc.*

"ONE wonders sometimes," said Hazard, with his rather small, bright eyes, sharp and quick as the eyes of a wild thing, straying over the confusion of Peking street life ahead of us. "Here's the kindest race in the world and yet the most callous; the noisiest and yet the most silent; the most beautifully ugly barbaric civilization that ever contradicted itself. For instance——"

His voice, which had been pitched in so cautious a key that it barely reached my ears, trailed off into silence—yet there had been a tentative question in it. Moreover Hazard was scarcely the man to waste words in abstractions at such a time as this. I searched the narrow, cobbled thoroughfare, jumbled with traffic, trying to discover what particular item of its alien life had caused his remark. And, doing so, I read the truth of his words in a score of little things.

I marked for the thousandth time, for instance, how indefinable was the expression in the black, almond eyes that stared at us from all sides. Richly clothed mandarins and coolies with ragged backs and bare, brown limbs, traders and tinkers and pedlers and starveling beggars with hands thrust out—they were all alike in that.

The very children, shrinking from us a little with a mixture of fear and wonder, had a third quality in their look that has never been analyzed. And what of the chantey which a line of beggars ahead of us were singing as they staggered under loaded shoulder-poles—plaintively and yet not plaintively, rhythmically and yet not rhythmically, regularly irregular in import and meaning and pattern of tone, the very spirit of the East, past all Western understanding?

But none of this was what Hazard meant.

"What particular thing?" I asked.

"That bird-stall on the left side of the street," said Hazard, looking carefully in quite another direction.

And after a few seconds' search, looking over the heads of the pedestrians, between human-borne palanquins, nimbly drawn rickshaws and hooded Peking carts, I glimpsed a proceeding that was at once very easy and very hard to explain.

In front of a stall filled with all manner of feathered creatures stood a tall, middle-aged Chinaman of the merchant type, dressed in a long, brown gabardine and blue-buttoned cap. Even at a distance the profile of his pock-marked face was harsh and repellent and cut deep with many evil lines. It was a face that might help explain why official China gave up so reluctantly its power of inflicting death by the slicing process; and yet this man, whose character I should have estimated in one word as "cruel," was engaged in one of the most beautiful offices of Buddhistic compassion.

Evidently he had already purchased a number of birds from the proprietor of the stall. Now he was receiving them one by one. Over each bird he passed his hand with a caressing movement, then lifted it and flung it high into the thin haze of Gobi dust that overhung the street—free!

And all this apparently to the absolute unconcern of the passers-by—save Hazard and me.

Hazard checked his pace.

"What do you make of it?"

"An offering to Kwan-in, the Goddess of Mercy," I murmured. "And yet——"

I do not know why I hesitated, why I continued to study the man with incipient suspicion. Worship with the Chinese is after all largely a bargaining, which is one point wherein they do not differ from some others of the human family.

This man, who seemed to mutter some mystic formula every time he loosed a bird, might have been imploring Kwan-in to avert a well-earned punishment from his head or to withhold her favor from his dearest enemy. But such offerings are usually made in the temple doorways—and besides nowadays belief in the Chinese Pantheon is rarely found in the merchant class.

"Perhaps," said Hazard, "and yet his mercy touches his purse more deeply than most. I saw him at another stand but a few minutes back. And, if you'll observe, he's releasing nothing but——"

"Carrier pigeons!" I exclaimed.

"Precisely. Now what might that mean?"

"Perhaps—" I began, and then hesitated, having no better explanation than that for some purpose he was trying to denude Peking of those occasionally very useful birds. That was highly improbable, but hardly more improbable than was my first explanation in the light of this fresh fact. For though carrier pigeons are expensive birds Kwan-in favors them no more highly than any other kind; and Chinese do not ordinarily forget their business instinct even in dealing with their gods.

"Also you might notice— But he's going. You see, he leaves the rest of the birds—as he did at the last stand. Shall we follow him?"

I nodded, as Hazard had known I would.

It was at least a chance—a rift in the surface of yellow life which flowed so smoothly and yet so mysteriously around us. Through such rifts one may sometimes get a glimpse of the hidden forces working underneath; and for four days Hazard and I had been following up such chances, peering into such rifts, conscious always that we in turn were watched and followed by emissaries of that very Force whose present whereabouts we were striving to discover.

Which Force was, of course, Koshinga, leader of the revolutionary Ko Lao Hui, and a world meance of abominable power.

Four days had now passed since Koshinga's bold attempt to capture *en masse* the governing bodies of China and to set up his despotic rule on the ruins of the republic. He had planned to enter the Government House from below, through an extension of the old Boxer underground workings, and to fall upon the officials while they were in extraordinary session, considering how best they could block his plans.

He had failed, else China would just now be writhing in revolution; and I had had something to do with his failure. He had failed, but so had our quickly contrived plan to capture him.

Hundreds of his followers had been taken, but what mattered that to one whose fanatical devotees numbered millions? The erratic genius himself had escaped—impossibly!

It seemed positive that he had been in the tunneling when, after all exits had been located and closed, the drive had commenced; and it also seemed positive that all who had been in the tunneling had been captured. But Koshinga himself had, after a fashion of his, merged into invisibility.

His appearance—Hazard and I were of the few men, either yellow or white, who had ever laid eyes on him—was monstrous in the true sense of the word. It would have been impossible for him to disguise himself or to slip past the guards unnoticed. But the head of the Asiatic Ko Lao Hui, maddest of revolutionary *tongs*, still remained at large—himself a madman, with that madness which is the base but powerful brother of egotistic genius.

Doubtless he was smarting under his defeat, flayed with the desire to avenge himself on those who were responsible. And Hazard and I had got in his way many times before. Wherefore we walked warily as might be, but with many reasons why we would not give up our conflict with him, besides the zest that conflict added to life. It was not pleasant to think of the effect upon the rest of the world of an Asia dominated by Koshinga, the apostle of brutal power; and he was nearer to domination than many men imagined.

For instance, not many imagined how close to accomplishment was one of his purposes—the utter demoralization of China's currency. For years Koshinga had systematically extracted tribute from every grade of Chinese society.

He had accepted as payment for immunity from injury at the hands of his lawless *tong*, gold and silver coin only. As a consequence the currency had been sucked dry of those metals which alone gave it weight and worth, like an emptied sponge. That was a secret fact, threatening the stability of the republic, of which Hazard and I had been informed only a few days before.

So we sought for Koshinga, having reason to believe that he had not yet left Peking—or rather we sought for evidences of some fresh activity of his. And so, his actions seeming to us peculiar beyond the ordinary and consequently hinting Koshinga, we followed the villainous-featured "giver-of-freedom-to-birds."

He turned a corner upon busy Ch'ien Men, where the crowds thicken so that even the placid Chinese lose their placidity in physical and verbal arguments for the right of way. For here two urgent floods of yellow life, entering and emerging from the Tatar city, meet and pass as they have met and passed for a thousand years.

It was an unmatchable welter of movement and color and sound, surpassing old Bagdad in possibilities of weird adventure, a flurry of odd costumes from every part of the empire, the jabbering of a dozen dialects in voices that ran queerly and fluently up and down the scale, melting all tones into an endless and compelling monotone. But our quarry was taller than the average of the crowd, and we followed his blue-buttoned cap readily.

Presently he stopped before another bird-stall. Hazard and I stood, apparently unnoticed, a little way off, and watched the queer performance repeated. But no one else of the non-curious throng, steeped in Buddhistic tradition, seemed to consider it queer; nor did the lavish spending of money interest any one save two beggars, old, goiterous and miserable, who came up whining for alms.

These the giver to Kwan-in, Goddess of Mercy, drove away with a snarl.

"COME, come!" murmured Hazard. "But he's a bit inconsistent. When he stops at the next stall, Partridge, let's get closer."

We did, sipping tea at a chow-stand very near the open-fronted shop of the third fortunate merchant in birds, and watching our man very closely over our cups. He had released perhaps half a dozen birds when I saw, or thought I saw, something that might easily be a clue to the matter. I glanced at Hazard—he had noticed the same thing. Without speaking we set down our cups and sauntered carelessly up to the bird-shop.

The proprietor, busy with his profitable customer, did not seem to notice our approach, nor indeed did the customer himself. Jostled by the passers-by, we edged quietly closer until Hazard was almost at his elbow. And now the fact of what we had seen was plainly evident.

That movement of the man's right hand over each bird, before he released it, was not a caress. Instead it was something much more in keeping with his looks—it was a search.

With the thumb and the tips of his fingers he was feeling under the wings of those carrier pigeons. Plainly he was not a seeker after merit with the gods, but after a lost bird that had carried a message.

Carrier pigeons sometimes go astray, and there were men in Peking who lived by liming, snaring and netting birds, so that left little to wonder at, save the evident importance of a message that was sought at such pains and expense and secrecy. But that last factor alone linked the thing, in nature at least, to Koshinga's vast conspiracy, and I was still watching the man intently when——

A tiny whitish capsule, apparently loosened by the Chinaman's handling of one of the birds, dropped to the cobblestones and lay there unnoticed by him.

A moment later Hazard drew out his handkerchief, wiped at an imaginary spot on his hand, then dropped the handkerchief and picked it up again. The capsule of course came with it.

Hazard fumbled it between his sensitive fingers, restored his handkerchief, felt of the capsule a moment with an intent look on his rather thin, student's face, and then touched my elbow and backed away into the passing crowd.

I followed him, more puzzled now at Hazard's uncharacteristic action in practically stealing what was obviously another man's find than at anything else in the whole episode.

But fifteen minutes later I had completely forgotten that matter in the overwhelming interest of the message itself. For when we opened the capsule in the private stall of a Chinese teahouse we found inside it a thin slip of paper, from which these words stared up at us in Chinese ideographs:

> Read, tremble at Koshinga's words, and act quickly. Under the gate of imperial passage a door opens to the gold of the Elder Brotherhood. The door may be found by the sign of the triangle; there are three signs, and the triple pressure is the key to the door. The place for the gold is the Gobi hiding-place.

The note was unsigned, but for our understanding there was no need for signature. The tricksy gods had favored us, even those gods of whom Koshinga pretended to be master; we had stumbled, by the sheerest chance, upon what might be the means of saving the young republic, already tottering from lack of funds.

That was what I thought then.

"——, Hazard, what luck!"

"Luck? I don't know."

"But surely," I whispered, for nowhere in Peking were we safe from eavesdroppers, "it's plain. By now Koshinga expected to be dictator of China. He'd have needed money; he brought it with him. When his plans went to smash and he fled he was forced to abandon it. And it's there where the message says it is, if we can interpret it—this message from Koshinga to——"

"To the merchant in the brown gabardine, it would seem," completed Hazard. "Only," he went on, smiling quizzically, "isn't it a bit too much of a coincidence that we happened to come up to the merchant, of all men in Peking, at the exact moment when the capsule for which he was searching dropped from under the pigeon's wing?"

"But why argue against the fact?" I questioned. "We did that very thing."

"That's it," said Hazard quietly; "we did."

He seemed about to say more but suddenly checked himself, his head slightly on one side, his eyes half-closed, his whole body tense—or so it seemed to me—in the strain of listening for something that escaped my hearing altogether.

"Well," he went on after a moment in a nearly normal voice, "of course it's plain—the hiding-place, I mean."

I squinted down at the message doubtfully, but Hazard went on hurriedly.

"And if it's as you think there's no time to lose. There's no reason to believe that I wasn't seen to pick up that capsule. So let's go."

"But where?" I asked without any particular surprize, for if my year with Hazard had not taught me to imitate his swift deductions and sudden decisions it had at least accustomed me to them.

"Why, it's fairly simple," said Hazard; "I wish everything were as simple. Under the gate of imperial passage—can that be any other than the Ch'ien Men gate, the central door of which used to be always closed except for the emperor on his way to the Temple of Heaven? And we both know that the tunnel through which Koshinga planned to attack the Government House runs under that gate. We'll know when we get directly under it by the sound of the traffic overhead."

"Ah, yes," I agreed. "Ch'ien Men gate is the throat of the Tatar city—we should know when we get under it."

"Then there," said Hazard, rising from his stool, "in the side of the tunnel should be the door that this message mentions, a door concealed so cleverly that it's been overlooked. Then let's see—what's meant by the 'three triangles' and the 'triple pressure'? In a wall of earth held in place where necessary by rocks and planks, as is the wall of this tunnel, what 'triangular signs' would be aptest to escape notice? Clearly triangular-shaped rocks, probably small ones.

"Then the 'triple pressure'—pressure on these three rocks, of course, probably simultaneous. That, I take it, should be enough to go on."

"Quite enough," I said, and now that I had his idea I could see that the puzzling words could hardly possess any other meaning. "And behind that door we'll find——"

"We'll find," said Hazard slowly, "whatever it is intended that we shall find."

I did not understand him fully, but then there were many times when I did not understand Hazard. Quite the boldest and cleverest of logicians, and with a power of imagination besides that enabled him sometimes to construct future situations with almost incredible accuracy, he was also one of the most careful of men. That is, he was careful in what he termed a subjective sense; it is there—he was accustomed to say—since mind is the master of matter, that true prudence lies. Thus—it was only one item in a large philosophy—he utterly refused to deal in prophecies of which he was not sure.

The reason for this was simple. His abounding self-confidence, his creed that in himself, regardless of circumstances, lay success, were to him priceless possessions, which he could not afford to stultify by even a mistaken forecast.

I sometimes felt that he carried that rule to awkward lengths, but at least it gave me confidence in whatever forecasts he chose to utter.

Thus in the present instance I was not even mildly surprized when, half an hour later, we had found in the apparently solid wall of that tunnel which had been begun by the Boxers so long ago in their attack against the Legations, and had so recently been carried nearly to completion by the more dangerous but kindred *tong*, the Ko Lao Hui—when we had found in that tunnel, I say, the corroboration of Hazard's reasoning.

But from the moment when I had discovered Hazard's lack of certitude concerning the outcome of the adventure, his implied doubt concerning the seemingly plain meaning of the message, a feeling of anticipatory uneasiness had possessed me. Perhaps the long trip through the dark tunnel—guarded at the mouth it was by a double sentry post—helped to unnerve me a little more. What I dreaded I did not know; nor could one ever know what to dread when dealing with such a man as he whose grotesquely horrible face my imagination was continually picturing in the darkness.

In our conflict with him we had long ago learned that nothing was certain but a never ending uncertainty. Nothing could be certain until Koshinga was finally disposed of.

And by his proper disposition, Hazard and I had lately agreed, must be meant not death merely. If he were merely killed the veil of secrecy with which he habitually hid himself from all but his closest followers would readily conceal the substitution of another who would carry on his work.

It was the centuries-old legend, known by every Chinaman, that had foretold his coming—just how this had been possible we had not yet learned—coupled with his really enormous brain-power, that made him the danger that he was. But so nearly complete was his dominance of Chinese society that a lesser man might easily take his place and push his work forward to an insane and terrible fruition. That is, he might do this if he could preserve the illusion that he was Koshinga the invulnerable, the omnipotent, the foreordained master of the world.

For those were Koshinga's claims, and the promise of world dominion was the bait wherewith he captured his credulous followers.

But Koshinga captured and in prison would be another matter, a living proof of the falsity of his claims. I enlarge upon this that it may be understood why Hazard and I so often, as in the present instance, worked against Koshinga alone. There were few men and no Chinese soldiers whom we could trust not to pull their triggers in a sheer panic once they found Koshinga before their guns.

But now, as I have said, we were standing in a damp and tomb-like darkness before a door behind which lay—what? Koshinga's treasure if the message we had intercepted had been a true one.

But more and more, without any particular process of logic, I doubted its truth. And more and more I became impressed with the grim suggestion, half-indicated and half-veiled, of Hazard's last words in the teahouse.

"We shall find," he had said, "whatever it is intended that we shall find."

What could he have meant by that, save that he suspected the message to be a lure? Hazard was no fatalist.

But to go on. We stood there, playing bright pencils of light against the wall, pencils which spread when they impinged upon the wall into glowing circles, which searched and searched, backward and forward, up and down. They revealed a solid surface of blackish clay, with stones of various sizes imbedded here and there—a surface in which there was no apparent break.

Yet here, breast-high, were the three triangular rocks which Hazard had predicted, themselves set in the form of a triangle. And when, searching for further evidence of a door, I brushed the earth near those rocks with my hand, not a single grain of it was dislodged.

Plainly some sort of cement was mixed into it. It was only fair to conjecture that the cement was intended not only to hold the clay together, but to attach it firmly to some hidden substratum of metal or wood.

* * *

"REMEMBER, Partridge—" Hazard's voice was the veriest whisper—"we know nothing of what is beyind this wall—nothing! So be ready——"

For anything! A subtle excitement tingled to my finger-tips. If indeed there were a door here, no wonder that it had not been found by the searchers on the day of the raid.

But for what most valuable thing could this hiding-place have been contrived by Koshinga? Surely not for money and gold alone, for if his plan had succeeded his money would naturally have gone to swell the treasury in the Government House.

The belated thought, vague and terrible, came to me of Koshinga himself, who had and had not been trapped, who had and had not escaped. But I remembered the light guard at the mouth of the tunnel and knew that if he still remained within it it was not that guard alone that was keeping him from freedom.

Hazard, leaning forward a little, was pressing with the muzzle of his revolver and the extended fingers of his free hand on two of the triangular rocks. But the message had spoken of a "triple pressure." I put my hand against the third rock.

I had little more than touched it when there came a slight, elusive, rather musical humming, like the sound of electric coils when heat is passing through them. Then silence. But the wall, or rather the door that was a part of the wall, had given way slightly, swinging inward. The invisible crack that had outlined that door widened slowly into visibility.

So much the lights that paralleled the barrels of our revolvers showed us, but beyond that crack was blackness.

We continued the pressure, using our left hands only, holding our revolvers ready. As the door yielded we flattened ourselves against it.

When it had opened sufficiently Hazard, who was nearest the jamb, whispered "Now!" and together we flung it back swiftly. It swung clear back, and when we heard it strike the wall we knew that no one could be hidden behind it.

By that time we had leaped through it, and the narrow, earth-walled chamber beyond it was flooded with light. It was, I think, a clever idea of Hazard's to keep two revolvers always fitted with most powerful small electric searchlights, operated by pressure on the butts.

We stood for an instant, tense as coiled springs, scarcely breathing, straining our eyes and ears for a sign of danger. Nothing was there—that is, no show of life. We could see ahead of us into the chamber a distance of perhaps fifteen feet; then the walls curved to the right, cutting off our view.

But in the very middle of the visible portion of the floor stood that which forced a low cry from me—two great chests, made out of some sort of dark wood, very old-looking, side by side, facing us.

"By the Lord, Hazard," I breathed, "those chests, the gold— The message told the truth after all."

I had glanced at Hazard as I spoke, and I saw that his face had suddenly turned rigid. His eyes had narrowed like a cat's, and there was a suggestion of the feline too in the way his agile body had drawn itself together, crouched down, leaning slightly forward, weight on toes, ready for a leap. Yet I had heard nothing, seen nothing.

"The truth indeed," said Hazard in a voice that matched my own and yet that I knew somehow was meant not for my ears but for others that were invisible. "The Ko Lao Hui gold beyond doubt. Let's have a look."

Then he turned his face full toward mine and his lips silently shaped themselves as if he had uttered a word—

"Danger!"

What did he mean? What could he mean but one thing—one thing! That weird and formless horror as of a thing monstrous beyond human experience, which with me was a part of every encounter with our enemy, came to me again.

And yet, the chests! Were they not corroboration of the message? Did they not contain part at least of that vast, extorted hoard of Koshinga's, so sorely needed by the republic from which it had been filched? They drew me with a curious fascination.

By now we were almost up to them. The hasps were unlatched, and the ancient locks looked invitingly easy. Perhaps, I thought, they were not locked; perhaps one could instantly throw back the lids. Had I been by myself I should have tried it, nor, I think, would any other man than Hazard have failed to do so.

As it was, we bent over them. Hazard jerked his revolver ever so slightly. It was a signal for which I had been prepared by a look from his eyes. From that deceptive bending position we leaped full tilt forward.

I think that few things in Nature are swifter than the forward leap of men who have trained their muscles in instant reaction to will. We landed, heels digging into earthen floor, just beyond the curve in the wall. Momentum flung our bodies forward; but our hands were our own, and they flashed up, streaming light.

The flashlights which were attached to our revolvers were so strong and diffused their rays so widely that the whole end of the chamber was of a sudden brighter than day.

My look followed the threat of my gun, and I snapped that gun down to an aim while something in my mind reared back with loathing and with fear; for there, incredibly helpless, stood that man of whom an empire lived in jeopardy—Koshinga, grim and terrible!

"I thought so," said Hazard, and for the first time in my knowledge of him his voice showed the strain of an effort to keep it calm. "The one of you that moves, moves no more."

And I saw then that his revolver was swaying like a serpent's head, that he was covering not only Koshinga but two others—two Chinese in dark mandarin gowns who stood at Koshinga's right and left, looking like frightened dwarfs.

"So! You have come. As I wished!"

I had heard Koshinga's voice twice before. Now, hearing the dead monotony of it, the hollow, powerful notes full of insolent mockery even while he stared into the black muzzles of our guns, I realized that under no circumstances would that voice ever change. And so I felt no wonder at his calm assurance, even although I knew that with a twitch of my finger I could drop his body lifeless upon the floor.

His yellowish eyes, only slightly oblique, glared at us with an effect of venomous disdain. His curiously deracialized face—then we had but heard, without being able to prove, the story of the long process planned in advance by which that deracialization had been effected—altered not a line from calmness.

His face was so terrible in its suggestion of force, black and diabolical, and so little like humanity that it was hard for me to keep from shrinking back from him as from a great uncleanness. I still retained my first thought of him, that he was an incredible nightmare come to life, an impossibility housed in flesh, a perfect animal egotism that might be destroyed, but could never be subdued.

The same question that leaped to my mind must have also come to Hazard's—why in the name of all that was fortunate had Koshinga doomed himself by tricking us here? Also Hazard must have shared my nerve-shattering feeling of facing an evil potency, terrifically powerful, and utterly hostile to all that mankind envisages as good, yet when he spoke again he had managed to compose his voice still further.

"Yes, we have come; but not as you wished. Your scheme to destroy us was clever—too clever, Koshinga. You should learn to use more commonplace means. But it is too late, for this is the end of you."

Something like a grimace of detestable derision passed like a threat over Koshinga's huge, misshapen face.

"Flies trying to push aside the planet in its course—do you think yourselves so important? You are here as I planned; you have come alone as I knew you would come, and as would no other men.

"True, I had also planned that by now you would be dead; but that will wait. You have fulfilled your mission; you have opened the door of my prison."

I think it was in the slight interval that followed those amazing words that Hazard suggested that I take care of the two Chinese, shooting if either made a false move, leaving him free to attend to the more dangerous Koshinga. Thus for the first time my attention was drawn fully to Koshinga's two companions. By their dress they were mandarins of the second order; by their faces men of more than average intelligence; while their connection with Koshinga proved them to be unscrupulous and vaultingly ambitious.

Yet I knew what membership in his Inner Council meant—the dwindling of personalities before his imperious will, the passing of courage and strength—so I was not surprized to find that, contrasting with Koshinga's calmness, they were pictures of fright incarnate, seemingly sick with terror. Yet there was something else in their faces too, something that flicked my curiosity sharply—but Hazard had spoken again, addressing himself to Koshinga. And the questions that he asked struck so close to the heart of the whole affair that I hung upon Koshinga's answer.

"Much power breeds madness, Koshinga, as madness breeds destruction. You speak as foolishly as you have acted 'The door of your prison'—if this is a prison why did you trap yourself in it? And having done so, why did you choose as your rescuers those who would so surely lead you away to a stronger prison?

"You have been clever, Koshinga, and I wish you had retained your cleverness. It gives one little satisfaction to triumph over a fool."

NOW I thought I understood Hazard's reason for taunting him. In spite of Koshinga's apparent helplessness there was that confidence in his manner that made Hazard not quite sure of our position.

And Hazard's very argument still further evidenced the falsity of appearances, for there was something wrong with facts that seemed to prove Koshinga's folly. Koshinga was no fool; and untrammeled egotist that he was he answered the accusation swiftly as Hazard had hoped he would do.

"Moles consider a glowworm and say, 'Behold, we are larger than the sun.' This prison was prepared by me for the officials of the republic, who will yet lie in it and cringe before me and do what I command them.

"But this time I was betrayed by a weak instrument; my plan to capture those officials was discovered and the raid was made. So I was forced to hide—I, Koshinga! I chose this place because it was concealed past discovery, entering it with these two faithful servants—and with other things of which you may learn.

"But since it is a prison the door to it opens only from without, as you opened it. So it became necessary that I have help; and so it was also that I was forced to seek help from my enemies, since only my enemies could enter the tunnel."

He spoke sneeringly, and so confidently that a chill passed over me, welling up from the secret recesses of my soul wherein terror of this man still unmistakably lurked. But I reminded myself that that power of imposing fear was the very substance of Koshinga's strength, and also of a fact that I knew to be beyond question, that not one of the three men before us could possibly make an observable movement that Hazard or I could not stop midway with a bullet. And so, there being one point in Koshinga's statement that still remained unexplained, I put in a word myself.

"A fair story," I scoffed, "only it happens not to be the true one. Obviously. You seem to know the way we were led here, and I ask you this. How could you, being imprisoned here, communicate your will to the false seeker after merit, the freer of pigeons, so that he would drop the message at our feet?"

Again there came that derisive curl at the corners of Koshinga's heavy lips.

"Fool, do you think Koshinga would enter a place like this without the means of communicating with his servants? Even a prison must have an air passage; there is one behind me, opening outside the city wall. The carrier pigeon which I loosed was not lost, but flew straight, bearing my orders to his owner, who is the master of many men, but my slave."

If I had not, perhaps mistakenly, come to regard Koshinga as a being quite outside all human judgment, I should have admired him then. From the moment he had learned that his presence here in the tunnel and his plan to capture the government had been discovered, he had played the only part that could possibly have effected his escape, and had played it with consummate skill.

Here was the only place he could have hidden from the searchers; and even before entering this secret cell—realizing that he could break through neither door nor wall without noise, and that noise would attract his enemies—he had planned to trick us to his assistance and to our own destruction. The plan had failed in part because something that Hazard was to reveal in his next speech had put him on guard; Hazard and I were still alive, but misgivings assailed me that even yet I did not know the plan in its completeness.

"And still," said Hazard, "you made a mistake, a very little, fatal mistake. You should have instructed your agent to carry the capsule in his hand while he was engaged in arousing our curiosity and tricking us up to him. Then when I picked it up it would have been warm, not cold; it would seem to have actually come from under the pigeon's wing, instead of from the outer pocket of the merchant's gown. But now——"

Hazard's voice was not yet completely under his control, and I caught in it a faint shadow of my own doubt. The coup was too easy for the magnitude of the result involved, nor was Koshinga one to yield so easily to capture.

Mad with self-worship as he was, he was still the craftiest of antagonists; behind his insolent composure there lay some grim intention; and though I could not see how he could hope to escape, the conviction of his supreme confidence that he would do so smote me unnervingly.

"But now," went on Hazard, "the game is over. You will follow us——"

Here Hazard took a short step backward, whereupon I, reading his intention, set myself to keep pace with him.

"Step by step," Hazard's voice had turned tense and deadly, "keeping your distance, keeping side by side, the three of you. We want you alive; but if any one of you makes a move that is not ordered it's not he alone that will die now, but all three. And you, Koshinga, will go first."

That was Hazard's reaction to the uneasiness which possessed him.

So we started to back away toward the entrance of the place, the others following us with a disquieting hint of willingness. Since Hazard had made me responsible for them, I turned my attention more closely to the two Chinese who flanked Koshinga right and left. Again I was struck by the soul-shriveling terror that distorted the faces of both of them—a terror that now seemed to me to surely spring from something more imminently dreadful than that imprisonment to which we were leading them.

And again my curiosity was flicked by something else which I seemed to see in their features—a fascinated look, a look of horror, a look also of some fixed and unshakable resolution—unshakable because it had been imposed upon them from without by a will which controlled and molded their own.

Now I know that look, coupled with Koshinga's confidence, should have given me at least a hint as to what was ahead. But neither did Hazard get the hint, and Hazard in a normal condition missed nothing.

The truth is that just then neither of us was capable of perceiving anything more than the obvious. The pressure of Koshinga's maleficent personality benumbed us both. About him there was an atmosphere of wizardry and horror that was infinitely disconcerting to the faculties.

It was by sheer force of will that Hazard and I were holding ourselves, in defiance of emotional stress, to the line of plain common sense. For instance I knew that Hazard's purpose was to reach the door of this chamber and then to fire a shot out into the tunnel, summoning help. But until my heels contacted with one of them I had even forgotten the existence of those two great chests which had been placed so conveniently for our inspection when we had entered the place.

But when I touched them a vague premonition filled me, thrilled me unpleasantly, as if they contained evil potentialities which threw a shadow across my mind.

Hazard, still backing away with pantherlike carefulness of tread, still holding his gun rigidly on Koshinga's heart, passed through the narrow space which lay between those chests. I edged around their outer end, to the right.

Our captives still followed us with ready obedience. If there was any change at all in them it was that the corners of Koshinga's gross mouth twisted still further upward with contempt.

NOW, by the distance which lay between us and the chests, Hazard and I had almost reached the door. As I remembered it the door was wide enough for two of us to pass through it abreast.

I reflected that our best plan would be to back completely into the tunnel before giving the alarm—then there would be no necessity of turning in order to fire a shot which would surely ring down the long dark passage to the sentries' ears.

I started to suggest this plan to Hazard, but something checked me. It was an inexplainable feeling of futility that seemed to say to me:

"It is not the time. It is not the time for Koshinga's end."

But Koshinga and the two Chinese had in their turn come up to the chests. Koshinga, being the central figure, naturally passed between them, while the two Chinese came around the outer ends. And Hazard said to me—

"Now watch them carefully."

Then he also had an idea—an idea of what? My own was incoherent, but somehow it revolved about these chests, so carefully placed.

Was it true that Koshinga's purpose had been to leap upon us and in some way destroy us while we were bending in a position of helplessness over them? To me it did not seem his way of doing things.

I steadied my gun on Koshinga's head. That way I could shift it and fire quickly at either of his companions, whom I watched most closely; but Koshinga was the one we must be sure of. And, still obediently keeping their alinement, still obediently following us, they came around in front of the chests.

That was it; they came *in front* of them; for immediately the two Chinese had passed the chests they closed in instantly until their elbows again touched Koshinga's. That was perhaps a natural movement; or at any rate it would have seemed natural had it not been accomplished with such concerted precision and despatch.

That was very strange in men who were plainly so sick and broken with fear; and when I studied them again with sudden suspicion I saw on the faces of each a look of tortured determination that made the skin on my own back stir and creep a little.

"Hazard—" I began. "Hazard——"

There was something I wanted to say, but I did not know what it was; there was something of which Hazard needed to be informed, but I did not possess the knowledge.

"Steady, Partridge, stead——"

Something was about to happen—what? And the next instant the question was, what had happened? Even now I recall much that followed with blurred indistinctness, as one recalls the events of a chaotic nightmare.

There was an explosion—two simultaneous explosions—which in that narrow space produced a terrific effect and a deafening sound. Hazard and I were caught in the blast of expanding gases; we were fairly lifted from our feet and flung back against the rock wall, while at the same instant a burst of white vapor enveloped us and filled the room.

On the heels of the explosion came the report of our revolvers. Accompanying that double report sounded two frenzied screams —the "Ai-ya! Ai-ya!" of Chinese in mortal agony.

But it was at Koshinga that we had fired —or rather, by an instinctive reaction, at the place where Koshinga had been. Even as I pressed the trigger I knew that Koshinga would no longer be there, that his reaction to the explosion would be swifter than ours, for the simple reason that he must have expected it. He must have expected it, he must have planned it; he must indeed have leaped forward at the very instant of the explosion, for now his huge form, vaguely outlined in the white mist, was darting through the door.

And he was darting out alone. Behind him the shrieks of the two Chinamen were growing weaker, and the sounds of their death-struggles were lessening.

"But the door!" cried Hazard. "He's closing it. After him—after him!"

We were leaping for him as Hazard cried out, but we leaped too late. Even considering the shock and surprize of the explosion, confusing us, Koshinga must have moved with almost incredible swiftness.

For even before we perceived him he had seized the outer edge of that door which not even its maker could open from within; and now he was drawing it after him; and as we clutched for it with straining fingers he slammed it shut in our faces.

After a while the air cleared; the vapor which had been produced by the explosion vanished. But long before then the two Chinamen were dead; and two lancet-like knives, driven deep into the leg of each just where those legs had pressed the locks of the fatal chests, showed the manner of their killing.

"But of course," said Hazard, "those poisoned lancets were meant for us. The explosion, ejecting the lancets, was probably produced by an electrical connection established by a simultaneous pressure of both the locks—a device similar to that controlling the fastening of the door. If we had tried to open the chests Death could hardly have missed us."

"And that was what Koshinga expected us to do. But in case we didn't he had this other plan already arranged—a fiendish plan!" And I glanced with a shudder at the twisted bodies of the two men whom Koshinga had forced to die for him. "Well, it was worthy of him. How did you happen to suspect——"

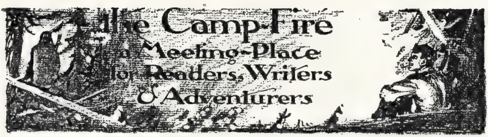
"The chests were too convenient for inspection," replied Hazard; "they were *too* convenient. And of course I was already suspicious. It was true, what I told Koshinga about the capsule being cold when I picked it up. I'd have mentioned it to you in that stall where we read the message, only I was sure there was an ear pressed against the other side of the wall."

At that point we stopped talking and began pounding on the stone walls of our prison with pieces of the shattered chests, as we had been doing intermittently for the last fifteen minutes. Since we were not compelled to silence, as Koshinga had been, we had no fear of failing ultimately to attract attention and win release. But in the meantime— Well, Hazard had already forecast accurately what was actually happening.

"In the meantime, Koshinga gets away. Those two sleepy sentries, unsuspicious of any attack from within the tunnel, will be easily disposed of. And of course the giver-of-freedom-to-birds, who came so near to fooling us, has made arrangements for his further escape."

"Well," I said, "at least we've succeeded——"

"In saving our own necks," Hazard completed my sentence for me rather glumly. "No, Partridge, we have to count this particular episode as a failure. We had Koshinga in our power and we should have kept him there, instead of which we find that we've actually been of service to him. But it is only an episode, we have that consolation; and when, Partridge—" now Hazard was brightening—"when in the world's history has failure not preceded success?"



# The Camp-Fire a Meeting-Place for Readers, Writers & Adventurers

**Our Camp-Fire came into being May 5, 1912, with our June issue, and since then its fire has never died down. Many have gathered about it and they are of all classes and degrees, high and low, rich and poor, adventurers and stay-at-homes, and from all parts of the earth. Some whose voices we used to know have taken the Long Trail and are heard no more, but they are still memories among us, and new voices are heard, and welcomed.**

**We are drawn together by a common liking for the strong, clean things of out-of-doors, for word from the earth's far places, for man in action instead of caged by circumstance. The *spirit* of adventure lives in all men; the rest is chance.**

**But something besides a common interest holds us together. Somehow a real comradeship has grown up among us. Men can not thus meet and talk together without growing into friendlier relations; many a time does one of us come to the rest for facts and guidance; many a close personal friendship has our Camp-Fire built up between two men who had never met; often has it proved an open sesame between strangers in a far land.**

**Perhaps our Camp-Fire is even a little more. Perhaps it is a bit of leaven working gently among those of different station toward the fuller and more human understanding and sympathy that will some day bring to man the real democracy and brotherhood he seeks. Few indeed are the agencies that bring together on a friendly footing so many and such great extremes as here. And we are numbered by the hundred thousand now.**

**If you are come to our Camp-Fire for the first time and find you like the things we like, join us and find yourself very welcome. There is no obligation except ordinary manliness, no forms or ceremonies, no dues, no officers, no anything except men and women gathered for interest and friendliness. Your desire to join makes you a member.**

FROM Arthur O. Friel, who has a story in this issue, comes an interesting report on an animal supposed to have survived from the prehistoric past. Have any Camp-Fire members run across anything else in this line?

Brooklyn.

Here's an interesting thing. At least it's interesting to me, and I think it will be to the rest of the Camp-Fire gang.

Some months ago, in connection with my story, "The Snake," I orated regarding the probability of survivals of prehistoric reptiles in the swamps of the Amazon region. In the course of said oration I quoted Charles Johnston Post as relating this narrative by an Indian rubber scout:

"SOMEWHERE about a couple of hundred miles back in the interior from this settlement (Riba Alta, on the River Madeira) he had come across the trail of an animal unfamilar to him. It was a trail like a snake—but not a snake. It was approximately three feet in width, and there were feet-marks on either side of the trail like a turtle's flippers—but only two. About a week later, in the shallow lagoon of one of the great lakes that are known to exist in that part, although no white man has yet penetrated to them, he saw a long neck rise out of the water. And it had a head on it. A snake's neck? he was asked. No, he insisted it was not a snake, he knew snakes. It was a neck with a head on it, something new. Then he fired at it, and it disappeared—and that was all.

"He had described, in the combined circumstances, a possible plesiosaur."

WELL, now comes a clipping from the Boston *Globe*, sent me by an old pal in Massachusetts, which announces the discovery of the plesiosaur's big brother—a brontosaurus—in the Congo. Nope, not fossil remains, but a real live one. Here it is:

"MONSTER OF THE PREHISTORIC AGE FOUND ALIVE IN AFRICA

"A brontosaurus has been found alive in the Congo, according to a news item accredited to M. Capell, a Belgian explorer. Scientists are leaving for Africa from every country to try to find the thought-to-be extinct monster which is now supposed, the last of his race, to be wandering about the land and waterways of the interior of Africa.

"Walter Winans of Baltimore, the explorer, who now is too old for active work, believes the find is true and, if he were younger, he says he would join the hunters who will attempt to capture the creature alive. He says the brontosaurus is a reptile, practically a crocodile, with a snake-like neck. It was practically a crocodile once, he says, and crawled on its belly when on land, although many of them had straight legs and used them.

"The Brontosaurus Excelsus is a member of the dinosaur family and grew, in prehistoric times, to the length of sixty feet. Although apparently stupid it possessed a great deal of cunning and used its long neck to spy above the reeds and ferns upon the approaching enemy. It is supposed to be more or less amphibious in its habits, feeding upon aquatic plants. Its remains have generally been found where the animal had evidently become mired in swamps and on the margins of lakes and rivers. Each track made by the creature in walking occupies one square yard in extent."

ALL of which just goes to show that in the little-known parts of our old earth there may be weird things rambling around even today—things which only the chap who wanders away from the beaten path is ever likely to see.—A. O. F.

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THE following letter was dated December 19, 1917. Knowing that an adventurer like the man who wrote that letter, and anything he might have to say to us, would be very warmly welcomed at Camp-Fire, I wrote asking for permission to pass his letter on to you and saying how glad we'd be to hear from him further. But there was no reply, perhaps because the only address given was the name of a city in Texas. Quite likely when he wrote he meant the letter for Camp-Fire, but, having no definite assurance on this point, I did not print it. But it's too good to lose and I venture to use it now, without giving the writer's name.

The letter he refers to was, you may remember, one objecting to our publishing stories by Hapsburg Liebe because the name was, or sounded, German. You may remember, too, that, Mr. Liebe's Americanism—of birth and ancestry as well as of spirit—was very thoroughly established, though our magazine would not have discriminated against any German-named or German-born loyal American. I couldn't myself very well, having a German name of my own, though it's several centuries away from Germany.

Just finished reading "The Cross at Purgatory Fork," by Liebe. Some time ago you had a communication from some kind of a cuss, who evidently thinks he is an American, asking you to discontinue Mr. Liebe's stories. Had you done so I and lots of others would have quit reading *Adventure* instantly, but of course you did not. Even had Mr. Liebe been born in Germany and was at present a loyal American he would be, in my estimation at least, entitled to as much consideration, at least, as we who have been here since this country was first settled.

WHO am I to express an opinion on a subject like this? Only a descendant of Ezekiel Hopkins who came over in the Mayflower and was the first commander of the American Navy (see U. S. History). Also of Stephen Hopkins, a signer of the Declaration of Independence, from Rhode Island. Am a civil engineer and just got back from South America, where I have been for twelve years. Helped survey the "Big Ditch," am a Civil War veteran (C. S. A. with Quantrell), and a Captain of Cuban Cavalry, during and before the Spanish American War. Will be 70 years old the 8th of March. Enlisted with Quantrell on my 15th birthday (March 8, 1863), served under Maximilian in Mexico as lieutenant of cavalry till he was killed in '67. Took up civil engineering and have been pretty much of a rover ever since. Am surveying auto roads at present in Louisiana and Texas. Put in some time as a scout in the U. S. A. in the '70s and again in '85 marched overland with the 5th Cavalry from Fort Fetterman, Wyo., to Fort Reno, Ind. Ter. Knew Frank Gruard, "Capt. Jack" Crawford and Ben Clark well and some time in the future may have something to say about them, and others of the old West.— —— ——.

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OUR old friend the Gila monster is led forward again, because the following letter is from an authoritative source and because it contains a general appeal for accurate field study of wild life in America. As you know, the Vorhies and Ditmars authorities referred to below are among those already heard at Camp-Fire.

American Museum of Natural History
Seventy-seventh Street and Central
Park West, New York.

Your letter requesting information in regard to the Gila Monster has been referred to me. In view of the large amount of valuable literature concerning the Gila Monster we can safely make definite statements about its bite. I will try to answer briefly your several questions:

1. *Coloration.* There are two species of Gila Monster which differ from each other considerably in color. *Heloderma suspectum* of southern Arizona and New Mexico has the head and body marbled with black and a pale tone which may be salmon, pink, white or pale yellow. *Heloderma horridum* of Mexico has the upper and lower surfaces black or dark brown with scattered spots of bright yellow.

2. *Poison.* You were correct in assuming that the breath of the Gila Monster is harmless while the bite is poisonous. The bite, however, is only mildly poisonous. Loeb, Van Denburgh and other writers (see below) deny the existence of a single authoritative record of the death of a man due to the bite of the Gila Monster. Still a recent statement has come to my attention of a showman in very poor health who died as the direct result of the bite of a Gila Monster. This record comes from very good sources.

3. *Fights with other reptiles.* The Gila Monster has been found to be very pugnacious in captivity.

There is at least one record of its having killed a non-poisonous snake. Data on the habits of the Gila Monster *in the field* are much to be desired.

4. *Remedy for the bite.* The poison of the Gila Monster is never injected deep into the flesh. The poison glands although homologous to those of the rattlesnake appear as true salivary glands on the floor of the mouth, while the teeth are not specialized for injecting the poison. If care is exercised in removing the animal so that the wound is not a jagged one, and if the wound is then carefully washed first with water and later with a saturated solution of permanganate of potash, no serious results should follow.

More detailed information in regard to the Gila Monster may be obtained from the following publications.

Vorhies, C. T.—1917—Poisonous Animals of the Desert. University of Arizona, Agricultural Exper. Station, Bulletin No. 83, p. 366.

Loeb, Leo, and others—1913—The Venom of Heloderma, Publ. Carnegie Inst., Washington, No. 177.

Van Denburgh, J. & Wight, O. B.—1900—On the Physiological Action of the Poisonous Secretion of the Gila Monster (Heloderma suspectum). Amer. Journ. Phys. Vol. 4, No. 5, pp. 209-238.

Ditmars, R. L.—1907—The Reptile Book, New York, pp. 169-177.

I am sure that not only the authorities of this Museum but science in general would appreciate any effort you could make to instill into your readers accurate observation of wild life in the field. The English have for many years distinguished themselves by their *intelligent* explorations. The British do not guess at the names of the animals they observe; they send specimens for identification to their British Museum. Why should not the Americans have the same loyalty toward, and secure the same benefits from, the American Museum that the British do from the British Museum?—G. K. Noble, Assistant in Herpetology.

IF AMONG us is Billy Law, New Zealander, here is a friend inquiring for him, a Britisher who is strong for our West:

Yokohama, Japan.

I am rather cocksure that any attempt to apologise for trying to creep alongside your Cheerful Blaze will be disqualified. Here, I must confess, that I've only just hit on the trail of your magazine.

My experiences out West, from California to Alaska, are typical of many of your Camp-Fire correspondents especially those of Mr. E. S. Pladwell—more so as regards his mining stunts.

Leaving dear old England at the age of 19, a very raw Britisher with qualifications as an assayer, I failed to make good as far as the financial aspect is concerned, but I have a lot to thank the wide-open glorious West for—a most liberal and practical education of life. One soon finds his level there.

MY MANY little adventures include a cheap but cold ride on the ore-cars from Rossland to Northport soon after Christmas of 1901. You couldn't buy a job on Red Mountain that Winter. Fell dead off to sleep in the Owl Saloon at N'port while my partner, the more enterprising half of the firm, indulged in a clean little game of poker. I take my hat off to Pearce, the proprietor. He was a real good sport. After a few shifts in the smelter we freighted most of the way to Spokane. Side-tracked twice, even after paying the brakey a couple of dollars. Cold! Oh my! I can hear my teeth chattering even now. Wintered in Spokane. Quite a good burg, by the way, for free-lunches. Failing an attempt on Denver, we freighted for the Coast and, judging from others, including professionals, we seem to have been exceedingly lucky on this ride particulary in getting through the Cascade Tunnel without any serious set-backs or, rather, throw-outs. Somewhere near Snohomish, in company with three others, we made our first attempt on the blind baggage. My! It was some going, but alas! for twelve miles only. Through a mistake of one of the crowd we landed on the depot side and face to face with the train boss. Tableau!

The excitement of this particular trail practically ended at the Everett Smelter (P. S. R. Co's) Arsenic Plant then in charge of one Little Billy, a big burnt Cousin Jack. It is almost quite superflous to mention that we were broke.

"Don't 'e sweat, boys." This to my pard and self. Just fancy a boss deigning to extend such instructions. Well, we soon discovered that he had indeed whispered words of real wisdom. Six days at the flues, shifting crude arsenic, including one lay-off, and then, *quantum sufficit.* I may as well emphasize that on starting we were in tip-top condition *re* health.

Pay: two dollars and seventy-five per shift of nine hours, though I believe my memory errs on the generous side. There was a bait offered of an extra two bits on lasting a couple of weeks or over, but I would much like to hear of the guy who accomplished this record. Really, one can hardly term this a sporting offer of the management.

APART from my profession, other side issues were: mucking (quite an art if done properly), hammer and drill, chuck tending, topman, assistant engineer and fireman, blacksmith's helper, prospecting, with a slight change as cook on a tug, and deckhand.

Six years of real solid apprenticeship to Life, and even if it were really possible, I would not part with these experiences for pounds sterling, gold dollars or pieces of eight.

DIGRESSING somewhat: I am thoroughly in accordance with Mr. W. H. Bambury. Caste, cliques and snobbery seem to be an everlasting curse of the Britisher, and here in Yokohama we have it typically exemplified. Rope 'em at about the age of twenty and turn 'em loose out West with no remittance seems to me a good cure, at least, it took it all out of your humble, though he never lost his self respect or pride in the land of his birth and could generally put up a fair average scrap when required.

I wonder if any of your readers were ever located on Texada Island, B. C.? I was there on and off from 1900 to 1904 with a farewell visit in July, '06. Implanted in my memory is that picturesque little limestone cove in Marble Bay, the magnificent view of the mainland from our shack and the Clark-Russell sunsets. A most charming spot for work and play.

From out of the Copper Queen, Cornell and Marble Bay properties came some very pretty specimens of bornite and peacock copper ore. From a freak sample of matte from the one-horse smelter at Van Anda, in the form of a metalic moss, I obtained two guineas (ten dollars) from the British Museum.

Gifted literary one could have written quite a readable volume on the humor and pathos of this little community alone, and all through the West it would seem to be the same interesting and absorbing atmosphere.—ALFRED H. CLARKE.

P. S. I would welcome any news of Billy Law, a cheery New Zealander, one time foreman at Van Anda, T. I.

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A CALL for inside dope on Pondoland from a New England comrade:

Hartford, Connecticut.

The Camp-Fire seems to be a great place for clearing up mysterious and peculiar things, so I am hereby taking the liberty of presenting something to the members, in the hope that some information may be gleaned from a discussion of the subject around the Camp-Fire.

Where is Pondoland? Is it "closed," if so, why? What is there, if it exists? Please note the above word "closed."

I HAVE a friend, an Englishman, one of the confoundedly tight-mouthed kind, who is a veteran of the Boer war. One day in a fit of talkativeness he told me of Pondoland. The tale he told me was bald enough, but from what I could gather this land is very rich in minerals, precious stones, etc.

To use his own words, "I saw with my own eyes enough copper ore to make the Guggenheims look poor if it were developed."

It seems at the close of the war he and another trooper endeavored to enter Pondoland. They succeeded and gained valuable information. Later they tried to enter again, but were prevented by the British authorities. A third time they tried with the same result. The fourth attempt failed and they were told they would be shot on sight if they tried again.

My friend became discouraged and came to America, but his friend tried to enter a fifth time and was killed in a running fight with the constabulary.

Here the tale ends, but what is the reason for this section of Africa being closed?—JOHN L. WHITE.

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THE Custer Massacre mystery—a statement that seems solid and to the point. Usually it is not easy to point definitely to the deaths and destruction caused by graft or by neglect or betrayal of the trust of a public office. Here the trail is clear and straight and blood-red, as the following letter from our comrade of the writers' brigade, Arthur D. Howden Smith, sets it forth.

We are too used to graft and to public officers who are traitors to their trust to be much impressed or to see clearly the terrible costs to us as a people. Also, as a people, we've never been definitely taught why graft and betrayal of public trusts are treason and more blackly criminal than crimes against an individual. Never having been taught the real meaning of individual citizenship in a democracy, we are unable to see what graft and neglect or betrayal of public office really are.

WE SHOULD have been having these things taught to us from six years of age on up. Just as we have been taught that it is wrong to rob or betray an individual. It would not have made us perfect citizens, any more than the teaching we've had makes us perfect individuals, but the first is as worth doing as the second. At the least it would have restrained the very large portion of us who would not rob an individual but who consider robbery or misuse of public funds merely a natural perquisite of public office—who betray a public trust often without even realizing they are betraying anything or anybody, yet who are trustworthy in dealing with individuals.

And what are we going to do from now on? Just continue letting American children grow up without any real understanding of their individual, personal obligation and responsibility as citizens of the American democracy? Change to some other form of government and find that it, too, is made ineffective in its attempt at practical democracy because it is built out of the same ignorant and crooked-viewed citizens? Or shall we make our present form of government what it should and can be made by building it out of citizens who *are* citizens?

THE people must control. But the people must be *fit* to control. Democracy is neither a form nor a practise of government. It is a state of mind, an attitude and practise of a people, principles and the daily application of those principles. Democracy is in the minds of the people. It can not be suddenly created by any change in form of government nor by anything else. Democracy is a growth. The only way to hasten that growth is by education. The only kind of education equal to the task is *systematic, organized, definitely directed* education. The only way to establish that kind of education is to establish it. Why don't you get on the job? Waiting for some one else to do it? Aren't you as much an American citizen as any one else is? Are you just a parasite?

Democracy and citizenship should be regularly taught in every school in the land. The first thing a democracy should teach is democracy. Our democracy teaches everything else.

BEFORE we come to Mr. Smith's letter I want to say that I do not like to publish any instance of bad faith by our Government, which means by the American people. We do not stand for the scrap of paper idea and we are ashamed when we find that our representatives have ever committed us to it. But that shame is good for us. We'll be less likely to permit such a thing again if we have already blushed under that dishonor. I do not like to publish the instance below, nor to admit that it is not the only similar case in our dealings with the Indians, but I should like still less not to publish it.

Washington, D. C.

I don't often intrude myself into the Camp-Fire—in fact, I don't think I ever did it before—but in the Dec. 3rd issue of *Adventure*, just out, I notice another addition to the mass of misinformation about the Custer Massacre. The writer, I believe, was a Dr. Arnold, who states that he was a member of the Seventh Infantry, which, with the Seventh Cavalry, Custer's regiment, was included in Terry's column designated for operations against the Sioux and allied Cheyenne hostiles in the Little Big Horn country. Now, as you probably know, I am not a Westerner and was not even born at the time of Custer's last fight. But I do like to study history, and the story of the battle on the Little Big Horn is one of the most dramatic in our frontier history. Also, it is one of the most ill-used, in that gradually as time has passed a mist of mistaken or false or partly erroneous accounts of it have been circulated.

LIKE most historical controversies it is rather a simple matter when you strip it to the bare bones of fact. To begin with, the known facts establish quite conclusively that neither Custer, Reno nor Benteen was at fault or was guilty of disobedience of orders. The attacks upon Custer's memory sprang out of the controversy in which he had become involved with President Grant. It does not reflect credit upon Grant's fairness or political astuteness. Briefly, Custer had found that horse-feed was being issued to his regiment which had been sent West by the Indian Bureau for use on the reservations, but had been sold on the side by the so-called "Indian Ring" to Army contractors, as graft. He called the attention of the War Department to this; the Democratic opposition in Congress seized upon the incident to attack the Interior Department which was headed by a protégé of Grant's; and almost before poor Custer knew it he had become involved in a very mucky political row.

Grant took Custer's action as a personal affront and for a time refused to permit Custer to join his regiment, then under orders to operate against the Sioux. He relented, under pressure, but retaliated by replacing Custer in command of the Little Big Horn column with Terry. Custer felt hurt by Grant's conduct, but he was not the sort of man to risk his regiment or his reputation in a rash action. His whole record as a cavalry commander proves him to have been not only dashing but exceptionally sagacious. The truth was that Custer—and with him that wily veteran, Crook, and Terry, Custer's immediate superior—was misinformed by the Indian Bureau as to the number of hostiles in the field.

WHEN the unrest of the Sioux—a justly founded unrest, too—was stirred by the incroachments of white prospectors in the Black Hills country of the Dakotas, which had been set aside by the United States as a part of their reservation, the Indian Bureau appealed for troops to round up the bands which had begun straying from the reservations with the coming of the Spring of 1876. In reply to inquiry from the military authorities, the Indian Bureau reported that there was a total of 3,000 Indians off the reservations. This, according to the usual computations, meant from 600 to 800 braves. The military expeditions set on foot to round up these bands were formed and given instructions to operate in accordance with the supposition that the forces opposed would be as reported by the Indian Bureau. Actually, there were intended for the field some three or four times as many soldiers as Sioux warriors, if the Indian Bureau's figures were correct.

But—and this is all-important in judging Custer—after the Little Big Horn disaster, the first move of the military was to insist upon the taking of a careful census on the reservations affected. It was found that at the Red Cloud agency, instead of 12,873 Indians there were 4,760; at Spotted Tail, instead of 9,610 there were 3,315; at Cheyenne River, instead of 7,586 there were 2,2800; at Standing Rock instead of 7,322 there were 2,305. There were 25,800 Indians off the reservations, which the Indian Bureau had never counted, a total force of about 30,000, allowing for hostiles from other agencies and tribes. There were at least 5,000 braves in the field. It was figured afterward that there were not less than 3,000 picked warriors with Sitting Bull at the Little Big Horn. Some Indians and white men think this is an under-estimate.

TERRY sent Custer up the Rosebud, with very loosely-defined orders. The general plan of campaign was for Custer to get above the encampment the Indians were supposed to have on the Little Big Horn, while Terry, with the slower-moving infantry, came at them from below. But if Custer saw a good opportunity to strike he was not to wait for Terry. Neither Custer nor Terry dreamed there were enough Indians in the field to bother the Seventh cavalry, whose twelve troops were probably nearly 700 strong. The main thing was to cripple the hostiles before they had a chance to get started, kill as many braves as posssible and run off their stock and burn their stores and teepees.

Custer started on the afternoon of June 22 and marched twelve miles up the Rosebud. The next day he advanced 33 miles, incidentally striking a lodge-pole trail which Major Reno of the Seventh had scouted several weeks before. On the 24th Custer followed this trail 28 miles further, camping at 9:30 o'clock that night. A council of war was held and, after canvassing the situation, Custer decided to strike off from the Rosebud across the divide into the valley of the Little Big Horn, where it was now apparent, the trail led. At 11 o'clock the Seventh took up the march. There was a halt at two o'clock in the morning of the 25th for daylight which came about five o'clock. Then the advance was resumed. The first hostiles were seen about eight o'clock.

CUSTER'S plan of operations was to take five troops, himself, down the valley of the Little Big Horn. Captain Benteen, with three troops, was to move forward to certain bluffs, from which it was supposed he would be able to charge into the Indian village on Custer's left. Major Reno, with three troops, was to cross the river and move up the other side so as to take the hostiles in rear. Captain Macdougal with his troop, was detailed to guard the pack-train. This was a perfectly sound plan and would have worked—had there been less than a thousand braves to fight, or perhaps even if there had been less than 2,000.

AFTER leaving Reno, Custer disappeared. Only two of his men came back. One was Trumpeter Martin who was sent back to Benteen with a message for him to join Custer as soon as Custer gained some idea of the odds against him—although even then he had no idea that he had practically the entire fighting strength of the Sioux in opposition. The other was Curley, the Crow scout, who escaped in the mêlée by letting down his hair in Sioux fashion and donning a Sioux blanket. What happened to Custer was pieced out afterward from the corpses of his men and from the accounts given by Indians who participated in the fight.

IT SHOULD be said, in the first place, that Benteen was obliged to abandon the route laid out for him, after a good deal of time had been wasted in a detour. When he got back to the valley of the Little Big Horn Reno was in trouble, and it was only by joining forces with each other and picking up the pack-train and escort that they were able to stand off the hordes that rode around them. Custer was already dead, but of this neither Reno nor any of the officers knew. In fact, they took it for granted that Custer had ridden clear. They simply hung on until the morning of the 27th, when Terry's column came up and relieved them. They suffered very heavily.

THIS was what happened to Custer: he advanced something more than three miles down the river, keeping behind the crests of the bluffs as much as possible out of sight of the Indians down in the valley. Then he swung in towards the river. Evidently, this was when he gained his first real grasp of the size of the village. Already he was under fire and his men were falling. Indians were pouring down through all the ravines and gulleys. But he turned, his column still in good order, and retreated inland about three-quarters of a mile. Here Calhoun's troop were detailed as rear-guard to stand off the pursuit. They were found in a regular skirmish line, body next to body, carbines cuddled to cheek, where they had died, fighting to the last.

About a mile farther back the pursuit became so bitter that the remaining four troops dismounted and formed line, Yates's troop in the center on a small ridge; Keogh's on the left; Smith's on the right of Yates's and Tom Custer's in the right center, where it was probably intended to serve as a reserve and horse-guard. Custer's men, for the most part, died in this position, in regular ranks, and Custer, standing on the ridge with Yates, was among the first to fall.

SITTING BULL, fighting with splendid strategy, launched a mass of braves against Keogh, smashed him, flanked the left of the line and drove off the spare mounts of all except a few of Tom Custer's and Smith's troops. The soldiers' horses gone, the rest was simple for the Indians. They simply rode over the Seventh, their total losses, according to their own figures—which included the attack on Reno and Benteen—about thirty-five men. Those of Tom Custer's and Smith's troops who got away with their horses retreated toward the river bank, but Sitting Bull threw a screen of warriors behind them and, hemmed in, they died in a dwindling circle—probably the origin of the myth that Custer and the whole five troops fought in a ring. There was no time to form a ring, no dominant position they could have seized upon.

THIS is a very sketchy account of the battle of the Little Big Horn. Custer's friends very foolishly attacked Reno for not coming to Custer's rescue. Reno had no reason to suppose that Custer had gotten into trouble. Also it would have been suicide for him to have attacked the 900 warriors who were attacking him while some 2,000 or more were wiping out Custer's detachment. And as has been said, Reno took it for granted, from the very number of Indians who were occupied with him, that he was bearing the brunt of the action and that Custer either had retired or had been driven off. It was not until after Terry had come up and the scouts were sent out on the morning of the 27th that the bodies of Custer and his men were found.

Likewise partisans of Reno made the mistake of retaliating upon Custer's memory. Grant did not hold them back. The real fault lay upon the shoulders of the corrupt gang of men who were grafting on the Indians, betraying the trust the Government had reposed in them, robbing the people of the United States as well as their Indian wards and too busy with their sordid, contemptible pursuit of pelf to keep track of the Indians they were supposed to look out for.

Incidentally, and by way of final word, it is sad but true that Custer and all his men died in a rotten cause, a cause which was nothing less than carrying out by main force the determination of the United States to compel the Sioux to accept the repudiation of our treaty promises to them. Talk of scraps of paper: The history of our intercourse with the Indians is full of them.—ARTHUR D. HOWDEN SMITH.

P. S. There probably was not a saber in

Custer's command. Mrs. Custer says he never used one on the plains. Our cavalry used the six-shooter by preference—it was six times as effective.

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HOOP-SNAKES and joint-snakes. The former I confess I'd always thought were purely imaginary, used for "stringing" the credulous, but certainly I don't *know* that there is no such animal. Nor do I know anything about joint-snakes. And now one of us, whom I believe sincere and whose word I would not question, testifies to both of them. Any others who can bear witness?

Graniteville, South Carolina.

Some moths ago some one rose on his hind legs and through the Camp-Fire gave vent to some expressions on the Gila Monster. I am not acquainted with the critter in question, and am not anxious to be. Will leave a discussion of *their* merits and demerits to those who are acquainted with *them* and *their* peculiarities. However, he did not stop there but villainously slandered two of our Southern pets by declaring that the joint-snake and hoop-snake do not exist.

NOW I was raised, as most Southern boys were, with negroes for some of my playmates. In that way I imbibed a good bit of their superstitions, and many a night went to bed frightened by the tales of "hants" and dreamed all sorts of horrible things. But among the tales they told were tales of joint and hoop-snakes. As I grew older many of these tales faded from my mind; others I dismissed as being improbable, among these the snake takes. Yet today I consider these tales true.

I have never seen a hoop-snake, but I have it upon reliable authority that they do exist. I have it from men who have seen them and killed them. It seems to be a rare variety. From what I can learn it has a projection on its head, which is uses to strike with; it seems to be somewhat of a thorn shape, broad and heavy across the base and tapering to a curved point and is very deadly. It takes its tail in its mouth, or wraps it around its head and rolls like a hoop over the ground and at a very rapid rate. I knew of one case when a boy chased by one of these snakes ran behind a tree, and the snake hit the tree and drove its horn in it. The snake was killed and a few days later the tree began to die. I had this from several parties, and all of unimpeachable veracity. I have also heard of it from others.

AS TO the joint-snakes, I know they exist having seen and helped kill two of them. Both that I saw were small, about three feet long, and green striped. I saw one hit with a tiny switch, and it flew into eight pieces. We kept quite and the pieces began to hop about and, being boys, not scientists we could not stand it. We buried the head and threw the tail in the creek.

The other was a somewhat similar occurrence. This time one of the boys picked up a piece of the snake and you could snap it, just as though it was a piece of brittle wood. It seemed to be nothing but joints, each fitting so far into the other joint. It did not make a smooth break, the part next the head having a rounded hollow in it, and the other part being a rounded projection. After breaking the two parts, they were stuck back together and seemed as though the snake was one piece. We killed this one in the same manner.

AS TO large snakes, I will believe most anything I hear. Have seen snakes here, two or three of them at least fifteen feet long. So why should they not grow to an extreme size in tropical countries? However, I don't like them. The only time I ever get close to a snake is when I do not know it. For instance, I killed a copper-headed moccasin that had crawled in bed with me *one time* while out in the country. I was waked by it crawling over my body, put my hand on its head before I knew it. Killed it because I was so scared I did not know what else to do. It threw it out of the window and the next day the people with whom I was stopping told me what kind it was and what a narrow escape I had.—JES L. QUIMBY, JR.

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WHO can help this comrade to mummify the snakes that bit him? He's perfectly right in taking a sort of special interest in them.

E. Mauch Chunk, Pa.

Some time ago, while I was rambling around, I had some narrow escapes from death due to snake-bite. Being a greenhorn in a strange land and sort of bewildered, that is how they come to get ahead of me. Twice I was bit by rattlers, but on both occasions I captured the snake alive and only saved my life by slitting the arm and leg. Now the information I'm after is: Can you direct me to either a member of the Camp-Fire (or non-member) who can petrify those rattlers for me? After the experience I had with them it would be an unforgivable sin to skin them and throw the insides away. I want them as well as the outside.—JOSEPH F. PAYOR, 320 South St.

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ORIGINALLY "L'Atlantide" was scheduled as a complete novel for this issue. After it was all set in type and made up in pages outside complications arose and, to accommodate its future book publisher and the literary agent through whom it had been purchased, we made it a two-part story. It was a most unusual case and involved a lot of rearranging but I'll spare you the details.

The main point is that it made us give you a story in two parts that we thought you'd enjoy more if read all at one sitting. Also it cost a very appreciable amount in money, time and delay. Legally we were entitled to publish it as planned, but it would have worked hardship—or what they feared would be a hardship—on others and we felt that if you were here to decide you'd be as willing to make a bit of a sacrifice as we were.—A. S. H.

# LOOKING AHEAD FOR DEMOCRACY

WE CALL ourselves civilized and enlightened, yet we arrange our affairs so that a few men, by stopping transportation, can starve and freeze us at will, deprive us for as long as they please of the necessities of life. That is idiocy rather than civilization.

Part of these few whom we allow to control our life necessities are capitalists, part of them are laborers, each part working for its own interest alone. Both consider the public, us, the great majority of Americans, as having no direct say or interest in the matter.

Our interest is the *first* interest, our say should be the first and final say—if this is a democracy. For surely, if democracy is rule by the people, the people's food, fuel, clothing and shelter should be ruled by the people if anything at all is ruled by them.

WHAT'S the remedy? Government ownership? Government control? These have their disadvantages, though it is to be remembered that neither has been tried under favorable or even normal conditions. It is also to be noted that this principle has been in practise all our lives in the case of our mail. Our mails could be far better handled, but, on the whole our transporation of mail has given us vastly less trouble than has our transportation of other goods. And cost us vastly less in proportion.

Also, what other remedy is there? Let things go on as they are now doing? Impossible and ridiculous. What difference will it make to the public, to the majority who are supposed to control in any democracy, whether Labor or Capital has the upper hand in controlling transportation? In either case we, the majority, will be the under dog, the exploited victim.

Transportation is a necessity to the people as a whole and the people as a whole must control it. Or there is no democracy. And by control I mean absolute control. Capital must be shut off from using transporation for its own ends, for filling its private pockets at our expense; Labor must be shut off from stopping transportation at will for its own ends, for filling its private pockets at our expense. Control of transportation must become so much a matter of the people's own that to use it for the purposes of any few or to interfere with it in any way will be a direct blow at the very fundamentals of democracy, to be punished as quickly and as severely as a Benedict Arnold is punished in time of war.

"Government control" and "Government ownership" have become phrases that at once raise in our minds a host of doubts and questions. But these are not the proper phrases for the principle involved. The right phrases are "the people's ownership" and "people's control."

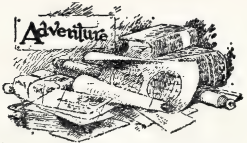
Call them by their right names and the matter begins to take on a very different aspect. For one of the things that most blinds us in our gropings for a way out of our numerous difficulties is our almost universal error in thinking of our Government as something different from the people, from us ourselves, even as something apart from and opposed to us. The evil result has been that our Government *has* become too much a thing apart from us. We must remember that it should be *our* Government, that we created it and make it possible, that it *is* we ourselves.

"GOVERNMENT control" or "Government ownership" will come as surely as day follows night. And when it does come it will be *unsatisfactory*. Why? For the same reason that every other reform, however wise and good in itself, will be unsatisfactory in practise. The reason? Because we Americans are bad citizens and every reform, every phase and kind of government, must be operative through us, carried out by us, controlled by us, taking its whole color and quality from us. It can't be otherwise.

Why are we bad citizens? For the same reason that if children are not taught, very, very few of them will read or write. We are lacking in civic or community morality and in real understanding of real democracy because we have never been systematically taught these things. We have been systematically taught individual morality and are a comparatively moral people. We have not been taught civic morality or the real meaning of democracy and are a civically unmoral people and an amazingly undemocratic people.

You can not build a sound house out of rotten bricks. No matter what style of architecture you choose. You can not carry water in a sieve. You can not make a silk purse out of a sow's ear. That above all other points, is the main point I have been trying to drive home in these talks through the last year or two and in other talks for a dozen years. *The people must control, but the people must be fit to control.*

The only way they can be made fit is by education. The only kind of education that can be adequate is systematic education in our schools, homes and churches. The only thing that can bring this about is organized, definite, direct effort *by us*.—A. S. H.



# VARIOUS PRACTICAL SERVICES FREE TO ANY READER

THESE services of *Adventure* are free to *any one.* They involve much time, work and expense on our part, but we offer them gladly and ask in return only that you *read and observe the simple rules,* thus saving needless delay and trouble for you and us. The whole spirit of this magazine is one of friendliness. No formality between editors and readers. Whenever we *can* help you we're ready and willing to try.

### Identification Cards

Free to any reader. Just send us (1) your name and address (2) name and address of party to be notified, (3) a stamped and self-addressed return envelope.

Each card bears this inscription, each printed in English, French, Spanish, German, Portuguese, Dutch, Italian, Arabic, Chinese, Russian and Japanese:

"In case of death or serious emergency to bearer, address serial number of this card, care of *Adventure,* New York, stating full particulars, and friends will be notified."

In our office, under each serial number, will be registered the name of bearer and of one or two friends, with permanent address of each. No name appears on the card. Letters will be forwarded to friend, unopened by us. Names and addresses treated as confidential. We assume no other obligations. Cards not for business identification. Cards furnished free *provided stamped and addressed envelope accompanies application.* We reserve the right to use our own discretion in all matters pertaining to these cards.

**Metal Cards**—For twenty-five cents we will send you, *post-paid,* the same card in aluminum composition, perforated at each end. Enclose a self-addressed return envelope, but no postage. Twenty-five cents covers everything. Give same data as for pasteboard cards. Holders of pasteboard cards can be registered under both pasteboard and metal cards if desired, but old numbers can not be duplicated on metal cards. If you no longer wish your old card, destroy it carefully and notify us, to avoid confusion and possible false alarms to your friends registered under that card.

A moment's thought will show the value of this system of card-identification for any one, whether in civilization or out of it. Remember to furnish stamped and addressed envelope and to *give in full the names and addresses of self and friend or friends when applying.*

If check or money order is sent, please make it out to the Ridgway Company, *not* to any individual.

### Missing Friends or Relatives

Our free service department "Lost Trails" in the pages following, though frequently used in cases where detective agencies, newspapers, and all other methods have failed, or for finding people long since dead, has located a very high percentage of those inquired for. Except in case of relatives, inquiries from one sex to the other are barred.

### Back Issues of *Adventure*

*The Boston Magazine Exchange,* 109 *Mountfort St., Boston, Mass., can supply* Adventure *back through* 1918, *and occasional copies before that.*

WILL SELL: Every issue from Aug., 1916, to Mid-April, 1920, for fifteen cents each, not including postage.—Address MRS. J. A. CLARIDGE, Milton West, Ontario, Canada.

WILL SELL: Vol. 12, No. 5 to Vol. 24, No. 6 inclusive. All in good condition; best offer accepted.—Address W. A. CAMPBELL, care of W. E. Nixon, Great Neck Station, N. Y.

### Expeditions and Employment

While we should like to be of aid in these matters, experience has shown that it is not practicable.

### Manuscripts

Glad to look at any manuscript. We have no "regular staff" of writers. A welcome for new writers. *It is not necessary to write asking to submit your work.*

When submitting a manuscript, if you write a letter concerning it, enclose it *with* the manuscript; do *not* send it under separate cover. Enclose stamped and addressed envelope for return. All manuscripts should be typewritten double-spaced, with wide margins, not rolled, name and address on first page. We assume no risk for manuscripts or illustrations submitted, but use all due care while they are in our hands. Payment on acceptance.

We want only clean stories. Sex, morbid, "problem," psychological and supernatural stories barred. Use almost no fact-articles. Can not furnish or suggest collaborators. Use fiction of almost any length; under 3000 welcomed.

### Mail Address and Forwarding Service

This office, assuming no responsibility, will be glad to act as a forwarding address for its readers or to hold mail till called for, provided necessary postage is supplied. Unclaimed mail which we have held for a long period is listed on the last page of this issue.

### Camp-Fire Buttons

To be worn on lapel of coat by members of Camp-Fire—any one belongs who wishes to. Enameled in dark colors representing earth, sea and sky, and bears the numeral 71—the sum of the letters of the word Camp-Fire valued according to position in the alphabet. Very small and inconspicuous. Designed to indicate the common interest which is the only requisite for membership in Camp-Fire and to enable members to recognize each other when they meet in far places or at home. Twenty-five cents, post-paid, anywhere.

When sending for the button enclose a strong, self-addressed, *un*stamped envelope.

If check or money order is sent, please make it out to the Ridgway Company, *not* to any individual.

### General Questions from Readers

In addition to our free service department "Ask Adventure" on the pages following, *Adventure* can sometimes answer other questions within our general field. When it can, it will. Expeditions and employment excepted.

### Addresses

**Order of the Restless**—Organizing to unite for fellowship all who feel the wanderlust. First suggested in this magazine, though having no connection with it aside from our friendly interest. Address WAYNE EBERLY, 1833 S St., N. W., Washington, D. C.

**Camp-Fire**—Any one belongs who wishes to.

**Rifle Clubs**—Address Nat. Rifle Ass'n of America, 1108 Woodward Bldg., Washington, D. C.

*(See also under "Standing Information" in "Ask Adventure.")*

**Remember:** Magazines are made up ahead of time. Allow for two or three months between sending and publication.

## A Free Question and Answer Service Bureau of Information on Outdoor Life and Activities Everywhere and Upon the Various Commodities Required Therein. Conducted for *Adventure* Magazine by Our Staff of Experts.

QUESTIONS should be sent, not to this office, but direct to the expert in charge of the department in whose field it falls. So that service may be as prompt as possible, he will answer you by mail direct. But he will also send to us a copy of each question and answer, and from these we shall select those of most general interest and publish them each issue in this department, thus making it itself an exceedingly valuable standing source of practical information. Unless otherwise requested inquirer's name and town are printed with question; street numbers not given.

When you ask for *general* information on a given district or subject the expert will probably give you some valuable general pointers and refer you to books or to local or special sources of information.

Our experts will in all cases answer to the best of their ability, using their own discretion in all matters pertaining to their departments subject only to our general rules for "Ask Adventure," but neither they nor the magazine assumes any responsibility beyond the moral one of trying to do the best that is possible. These experts have been chosen by us not only for their knowledge and experience but for their integrity and reliablity. We have emphatically assured each of them that his advice or information is not to be affected in any way by whether a given commodity is or is not advertised in this magazine.

1. **Service free to anybody, provided stamped and addressed envelope is enclosed. Correspondents writing to or from foreign countries will please enclose International Reply Coupons, purchasable at any post-office, and exchangeable for stamps of any country in the International Postal Union.**
2. **Send each question direct to the expert in charge of the particular department whose field covers it. He will reply by mail. Do NOT send questions to this magazine.**
3. **No reply will be made to requests for partners, for financial backing, or for chances to join expeditions. "Ask Adventure" covers business and work opportunities, but only if they are outdoor activities, and only in the way of general data and advice. It is in no sense an employment bureau.**
4. **Make your questions definite and specific. State exactly your wants, qualifications and intentions. Explain your case sufficiently to guide the expert you question.**
5. **Send no question until you have read very carefully the exact ground covered by the particular expert in whose department it seems to belong.**

**1. ★ Islands and Coasts**
CAPTAIN A. E. DINGLE, Hamilton, Bermuda. Islands of Indian and Atlantic oceans; the Mediterranean; Cape Horn and Magellan Straits. Ports, trade, peoples, travel.

**2. The Sea Part 1**
BERIAH BROWN, Seattle Press Club, 1309 Fifth Ave., N. E., Seattle, Wash. Covering ships, seamen and shipping; nautical history, seamanship, navigation, yachting; commercial fisheries of North America; marine bibliography of U. S.; seafaring on fishing-vessels of the North Atlantic and Pacific banks, small-boat sailing, and old-time shipping and seafaring.

**3. ★ The Sea Part 2**
CAPTAIN A. E. DINGLE, Hamilton, Bermuda. Such questions as pertain to the sea, ships and men local to the Bristish Empire should be sent to Captain Dingle, not Mr. Brown.

**4. Eastern U. S. Part 1**
RAYMOND S. SPEARS, Little Falls, N. Y. Covering Mississippi, Ohio, Tennessee, Michigan and Hudson valleys; Great Lakes, Adirondacks, Chesapeake Bay; river, lake and road travel, game, fish and woodcraft; furs, fresh-water pearls, herbs; and their markets.

**5. Eastern U. S. Part 2**
HAPSBURG LIEBE, 6 W. Concord Ave., Orlando, Florida. Covering Tennessee, Alabama, Mississippi, and N. and S. Carolina, Florida and Georgia except Tennessee River and Atlantic seaboard. Hunting, fishing, camping; logging, lumbering, sawmilling, saws.

**6. Eastern U. S. Part 3**
DR. G. E. HATHORNE, 44 Central Street, Bangor, Maine. Covering Maine; fishing, hunting, canoeing, guides, outfits, supplies.

**7. Middle Western U. S. Part 1**
JOSEPH MILLS HANSON (lately Capt. A. E. F.), care *Adventure*. Covering the Dakotas, Nebraska, Iowa, Kansas. Hunting, fishing, travel, *Especially* early history of Missouri Valley.

**8. Middle Western U. S. Part 2**
JOHN B. THOMPSON, 906 Pontiac Bldg., Chicago, Ill. Covering Missouri, Arkansas and the Missouri Valley up to Sioux City, Iowa. Wilder countries of the Ozarks, and swamps; hunting, fishing, trapping, farming, mining and range lands; big timber sections.

**9. Middle Western U. S. Part 3**
LARRY ST. JOHN, 1101 Kimball B'ld'g, Chicago, Ill. Covering Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, Wisconsin, Minnesota, and Lake Michigan. Fishing, hunting, trapping, lumbering, canoeing, camping, guides, outfits, motoring, agriculture, minerals, natural history, clamming, early history, legends.

**10. Western U. S. Part 1**
E. E. HARRIMAN, 2303 W. 23d St., Los Angeles, Calif. Covering California, Oregon, Washington, Utah, Nevada, Arizona. Game, fur, fish; camp, cabin; mines, minerals; mountains.

**11. Western U. S. Part 2 and Mexico Part 1 Northern**
J. W. WHITEACKER, 1105 W. 10th St., Austin, Texas. Covering Texas, Oklahoma, and the boarder states of old Mexico; Sonora, Chihuahua, Coahuila, Nuevo Leon and Tamaulipas. Minerals, lumbering, agriculture, travel, customs, topography, climate, natives, hunting, history, industries.

**12. Mexico Part 2 Southern**
EDGAR YOUNG, care *Adventure* Magazine, Spring and Macdougal Sts., New York, N. Y. Covering that part of Mexico lying south of of line drawn from Tampico to Mazatlan. Mining, agriculture, topography, travel, hunting, lumbering, history, natives, commerce.

★*(Enclose addressed envelope with 5 cents in stamps NOT attached)*
*Return postage not required from U. S. or Canadian soldiers, sailors or marines in service outside the U. S., its possessions, or Canada.*

**13. ★ North American Snow Countries Part 1**
S. E. SANGSTER ("Canuck"), L. B. 393, Ottawa, Canada. Covering Height of land and northern parts of Quebec and Ontario (except strip between Minn. and C. P. R'y); southeastern parts of Ungava and Keewatin. Trips for sport, canoe routes, big game, fish, fur; equipment; Summer, Autumn and Winter outfits; Indian life and habits; Hudson's Bay Co. posts; minerals, timber; customs regulations. No questions answered on trapping for profit.

**14. North American Snow Countries Part 2**
HARRY M. MOORE, Deseronto, Ont., covering southeastern Ontario and the lower Ottawa Valley. Fishing, hunting, canoeing, mining, lumbering, agriculture, topography, travel, camping.

**15. ★ North American Snow Countries Part 3**
GEORGE L. CATTON, Gravenhurst, Muskoka, Ont., Canada. Covering Southern Ontario and Georgian Bay. Fishing, hunting, traping, canoeing.

**16. North American Snow Countries Part 4**
ED. L. CARSON, Burlington, Wash. Covering Yukon, British Columbia and Alberta including Peace River district; to Great Slave Lake. Outfits and equipment, guides, big game, minerals, forest, prairie; travel; customs regulations.

**17. North American Snow Countries Part 5**
THEODORE S. SOLOMONS, 2837 Fulton St., Berkeley, Calif. Covering Alaska. Arctic life and travel; boats, packing, back-packing, traction, transport, routes; equipment, clothing, food; physics, hygiene; mountain work.

**18. North American Snow Countries Part 6**
H. S. BELCHER, The Hudson's Bay Company, Ft. Alexander, Manitoba, Canada. Covering Manitoba, Saskatchewan, MacKenzie and Northern Keewatin. Homesteading, mining, hunting, trapping, lumbering and travel.

**19. North American Snow Countries Part 7**
JAS. F. B. BELFORD, Richmond, Quebec. Covering New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Newfoundland and southeastern Quebec. Hunting, fishing, lumbering, camping, trapping, auto and canoe trips, history, topography, farming, homesteading, mining, paper and wood-pulp industries, land grants, water-power.

**20. Hawaiian Islands and China**
F. J. HALTON, 632 S. Michigan Ave., Chicago, Ill. Covering customs, travel, natural history, resources, agriculture, fishing, hunting.

**21. Central America**
EDGAR YOUNG, care *Adventure* Magazine, Spring and Macdougal Sts., New York, N. Y. Covering Canal Zone, Panama, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Honduras, British Honduras, Salvador, Guatemala. Travel, customs, language, game, local conditions, minerals, trading.

**22. South America Part 1**
EDGAR YOUNG, care *Adventure* Magazine, Spring and Macdougal Sts., New York, N. Y. Covering Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia and Chile; geography, inhabitants, history, industries, topography, minerals, game, languages, customs.

**23. South America Part 2**
P. H. GOLDSMITH, *Inter-American Magazine*, 407 West 117th St., New York, N. Y. Covering Venezuela. The Guianas, Brazil, Uruguay, Paraguay and Argentine Republic. Travel, history, customs, industries, topography, natives, languages, hunting and fishing.

**24. Asia, Southern**
GORDON MCCREAGH, 21 East 14th St., New York City. Covering Red Sea, Persian Gulf, India, Tibet, Burma, Western China, Siam, Andamans, Malay States, Borneo, the Treaty Ports; hunting, trading, traveling.

**25. Philippine Islands**
BUCK CONNOR, Box 807A., University of New Mexico, Albuquerque, N. M. Covering history, natives, topography, customs, travel, hunting, fishing, minerals, agriculture, exports and imports, manufacturing.

**26. Japan**
GRACE P. T. KNUDSON, Castine, Maine. Covering Japan: Commerce, politics, people, customs, history, geography, travel, agriculture, art, curios.

**27. Russia and Eastern Siberia**
MAJOR A. M. LOCHWITZKY (Formerly Lieut.-Col. I. R. A.; Ret.), Austin, Texas. Covering Petrograd and its province; Finland, Northern Caucasus; Primorsk District, Island of Sakhalien; travel, hunting, fishing, explorations among native tribes; markets, trade, curios.

**28. Africa Part 1**
THOMAS S. MILLER, Carmel, Monterey Co., Calif. Covering the Gold, Ivory and Fever Coasts of West Africa, the Niger River from the delta to Jebba, Northern Nigeria. Canoeing, labor, trails, trade, expenses, outfitting, flora; tribal histories, witchcraft, savagery.

**29. Africa Part 2**
GEORGE E. HOLT, Frederick, Md. Covering Morocco; travel, tribes, customs, history, topography, trade.

**30. ★ Africa Part 3. Portuguese East Africa**
R. W. WARING, Corunna, Ontario, Canada. Covering trade, produce, climate, opportunities, game, wild life, travel, expenses, outfits, health, etc.

**31. ★ Africa Part 4. Transvaal, N.W. and Southern Rhodesia, British East Africa, Uganda and the Upper Congo**

CHARLES BEADLE, Care Society of Authors and Composers. Central Buildings, Tothill St., Westminster, London, England. Covering geography, hunting, equipment, trading, climate, mining, transport, customs, living conditions, witchcraft, opportunities for adventure and sport.

**32. ★ New Zealand and the South Sea Islands**
TOM L. MILLS, *The Feilding Star*, Feilding, New Zealand. Covering New Zealand, Cook Islands and Samoa. Travel, history, customs; opportunities for adventurers, explorers and sportsmen.

**33. ★ Australia and Tasmania**
ALBERT GOLDIE, Gibbs Chambers, Moore St., Sydney, Australia. Covering customs, resources, travel, hunting, sports, politics, history.

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## FIREARMS, PAST AND PRESENT

Rifles, shot-guns, pistols, revolvers and ammunition. (Any questions on the arms adapted to a particular locality should *not* be sent to this department but to the "Ask Adventure" editor covering the district in question.)

**A.—All Shotguns** (including foreign and American makes). J. B. THOMPSON, 906 Pontiac Bldg., Chicago, Ill.

**B.—All Rifles, Pistols and Revolvers** (including foreign and American makes). D. WIGGINS, Salem, Ore.

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## FISHING IN NORTH AMERICA

### Salt and Fresh Water Fishing

J. B. THOMPSON, 906 Pontiac Bldg, Chicago., Ill. Covering fishing-tackle and equipment; fly and bait casting; live bait; camping outfits; fishing trips.

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## STANDING INFORMATION

For general information on U. S. and its possessions, write Sup't of Public Documents, Wash., D. C., for catalog of all Government publications.

For the Philippines and Porto Rico, the Bureau of Insular Affairs, War Dep't, Wash., D. C.

For Alaska, the Alaska Bureau, Chamber of Commerce, Central Bldg., Seattle, Wash.

For Hawaii, Hawaii Promotion Committee, Chamber of Commerce, Honolulu, T. H. Also, Dep't of the Interior, Wash., D. C.

For Cuba, Bureau of Information, Dep't of Agri., Com., and Labor, Havana, Cuba.

For Central and South America, John Barrett, Dir. Gen. Pan-American Union, Wash., D. C.

For R. N. W. M. P., Commissioner Royal Canadian Mounted Police, Ottawa, Can. Only unmarried British subjects, age 18 to 40, above 5 ft. 8 in. and under 175 lbs., accepted.

For Canal Zone, the Panama Canal Commission, Wash., D. C.

For U. S. its possessions and most foreign countries, the Dep't of Com., Wash., D. C.

★(*Enclose addressed envelope with 5 cents in stamps NOT attached*)

### To Learn the Chinese Language

THERE are two principal dialects spoken in China, and both can be learned if one care to apply himself to study. The Mandarin tongue is the language of State and the upper classes, while the sing-song most familiar to our ears comes from Canton:

*Question:*—"Is it possible to really master the Chinese language? If so, how long would it take to learn enough to make a Chinaman understand one? Where could I obtain instruction in the language?"—A. WHYTE, Norwood, Manitoba, Canada.

*Answer*, by Mr. Halton:—It is quite possible to master the Chinese language, but extremely difficult, for the reason that every district in China has a different dialect; and even Chinese from Fukien Province can not understand a Chinese from Canton, although the distance is not much more than five or six hundred miles.

The Chinese language commonly used for business purposes is what is called "Cantonese." That is, most of the Chinese in the United States are Cantonese and speak that language. Those in diplomatic circles, however, and the more cultured Northern Chinese speak what is known as the Mandarin language. Roughly speaking, the Mandarin language is spoken in Shanghai and north of there and Cantonese in the vicinity of Hong Kong and the hinterland.

The written language, however, is the same in both cases. A Chinaman from any part of the country can understand a letter written by Chinese from any other section, although he could not understand the spoken language.

I should think that in any large city there would be Chinese proficient to teach the language and there is a very good book on the subject written by J. Dyer Ball, which can be purchased from Kelly & Walsh, Hong Kong.

### Land in Argentine Republic

TO PROMOTE the development of its vast agricultural resources, Argentina offers rich farming land at the rate of 100 acres for $220, payable in installments of $45 a year. There's room for all. The Republic, while about one-third the size of the United States, has a population of only 10,000,000:

*Question:*—"I intend to go to Argentina this Fall and am anxious to obtain information about the inhabitants, climate, languages, customs and industries of that country. Also, must I expect to fight fever while there, and are the snakes as numerous and dangerous as in some other South American Republics?

What hunting and outdoor sport could I expect?

I may want to remain in the country if there is a good chance to become a small landholder, so please inform me as to stock-raising, crops, markets, transportation and working conditions."—WILLIAM A. BUDINOT, Naches, Wash.

*Answer*, by Mr. Goldsmith:—The Argentine Republic is the fourth country in size of America, being somewhat more than one-third the size of the United States. It has about ten million inhabitants. The climate in the north is subtropical; that in the center, say, in the regions of Buenos Aires, is temperate; and that in the far south is about like the climate of northern United States. The seasons, however, are reversed, Winter coming in June, July and August; Summer in December, January and February; Spring in September, October and November, and Autumn in March, April and May. The general language is Spanish, although, inasmuch as there are more than a million Italians or their immediate descendants in the country, Italian is very common. French, English, German and other European languages are spoken.

There are few Indians, such as there are being in the Gran Chaco, in the northwest, and in Patagonia, in the far south. I think you ought not to give any particular thought to fevers or other diseases. The country is quite as healthful as the United States, and there is no particular danger to be expected from snakes, wild animals, etc. Hunting and fishing are naturally not good in the neighborhood of the great centers.

If you are interested to remain in Argentina and take up land, I think you would have an extremely good opportunity in Misiones, in the north, about thirty-five hours on the train and by road conveyance from Buenos Aires. The government offers homesteads of fifty hectares (somewhat more than a hundred acres) at five hundred pesos (about $220), to be paid in equal annual instalments during a period of five years. The conditions are that one shall live upon his property and improve it. That region is rich, and I think its development is going to be rapid.

The crops are about the same as those of the United States, say, in the region of the Carolinas, except that alfalfa, manioc, *hierba mate* (Paraguay tea), and some other crops are produced.

### The Art of Fly-Casting

ONCE become a convert and you're pretty sure to turn your back on most other forms of fishing. For fly-casting is the last word in the sport. Gather round, old-timers. Perhaps there's something new here even for you:

*Question:*—"Please give me some general information about fly-casting and equipment. I want the sort that a beginner should use and shall appreciate any tips on this fine art you may care to give me."—CHARLES KRUGER, Metropolis, Ill.

*Answer*, by Mr. Thompson:—A split bamboo rod for fly-casting for both trout and bass should be about 5 ounces, 9½ ft. long. Get a hand-made rod if possible; if you can't, for the price, a steel rod is better than a machine-made bamboo. Use a 6-foot gut leader, single gut preferred, and an enamel silk line size H, which will suit the rod in most makes.

Good bass flies run in size from No. 4 for clear water to 4-0., but the last is the limit, as it is very large for anything but highly colored waters. Some of the best bass flies are Silver Doctor, Parmacheene Bell, Col. Fuller, Queen of the Waters, Black Gnat, Butcher, tied Salmon pattern, McGinty, Montreal, Lord Baltimore, Babcock and almost all of the bucktails and squirrel-tails are good, too. This will give you a good start and will fit for most of the season in all waters. For trout use a fine 6-ft. leader, and hooks ranging from size 8 to 14, in Abbey, Professor, Cahill, Jock Scott, the Midges, Coachman, Royal Coachman, Seth Green, Rube Wood, Grizzly King.

Don't try for long casts at first, but get accuracy, and let the spring of the rod lay the fly straight out on the water instead of trying to throw it. Let the line out gradually, with a whipping action, in front of you, holding the rod straight up and moving it forward with the elbow close to the body.

As you start to drop the fly in the water straighten out your arm. Give it slight action. When you recover give the rod a quick lift straight up, but do not let it go far back of your shoulder, only just as you feel the slight pull of the fly, then whip forward again with a sort of sweep. In a little while you will be ready to fish.

### The Wealth of Sonora

WHEN the crash of revolution struck this second largest state of old Mexico, its vast resources were on the verge of great development. What the future holds for a land rich in almost every valuable mineral, and from whose waters come the finest pearls in the world, one can easily guess. But when—that's the question:

*Question:*—"Will you kindly give me some information on Sonora? What is the climate? What is the average altitude? What Indian tribes inhabit it, and what class of languages does their speech belong to?

Can you give me an idea of what kind of fauna, avifauna and flora is found there? What would be necessary in the way of an outfit for a man who is not afraid to rough it and who wants to travel light but right? Is there any game to be found in the country?

Is the state entirely explored? Is the state mineralized to any great extent and if so what are the more important minerals?"—E. S. MILLER, Seattle, Wash.

*Answer*, by Mr. Whiteaker:—Sonora, one of the most northern of the Pacific Coast states of Mexico, is the second largest in the Republic. The Sonora littoral, which is low and arid, extends in a line almost parallel with Lower California and is washed by the Gulf for a distance of 860 kilometers, or about 540 miles.

This littoral, from the mouth of the Colorado River to the Port of Agiabampo, is indented with salty lagoons and marshes, swarming with alligators, crocodiles and allied reptilia.

Tiburon Island is separated from the mainland by Little Hell Strait. The island is inhabited by a fierce race of Indians (Seris, of the Yuman family) with anthropophagous instincts. Fishermen captured by them are sometimes eaten.

The climate on the Sonora coast is hot, endurable on the plains, and cool in the mountains. During the Summer the thermometer often reaches 98 degrees in Hermosillo, and in Guaymas it has reached as high as 119 degrees Fahr. The minimum temperature of Winter is 45 degrees Fahr. Frost occurs occasionally in the Sierra Madres region. The rainfall is moderate, and where irrigation is resorted to the land is very productive.

The fauna and flora, remarkable for their wealth and variety, embrace a number of special species as well as many common to the rest of the republic. The Gulf of California, noted for its fish and pearl oysters, produces gems superior to even those of the Gulfs of Aden and Ceylon.

Black and grizzly bears, mountain lions, ounce, panthers, leopards, and many smaller animals, abound but are seldom hunted. Alligator hunting is one of the most popular sports of the littoral.

The principal agricultural products are fruits, sugar cane, tobacco, cereals, cotton and a great variety of vegetables. Much of the land is uncultivated.

Very little of the state is unexplored, if any. It is one of the richest mineralized regions in the world—gold, silver, lead, copper, coal, iron, cinnabar, graphite, antimony and other minerals.

The Apaches and unsubjugated bands of Yaquis still roam the remote regions. The Yaquis speak the Cahita language. The Mexican language is Indian and Spanish mixed.

You can get the kind of clothing that you will need when you get there, so you will not be burdened with a lot of extras. Mexico at the present time is no place for an American, and I would advise that you postpone going until things are more quiet over the border.

### Our Western Coast States

IF YOU are one of those deluded persons, and there seem to be thousands, who think rich land can still be taken up for homesteads in California, Oregon and Washington, read what Mr. Harriman tells a man who would become a homesteader:

*Question:*—"The information I seek is in regard to taking up a homestead in some Northwestern State. Myself and a few friends wish to leave here in the Spring or early Summer and homestead a section or the allowance, preferably in Oregon or Washington.

We wish to get located on a homestead that will be pretty well supplied with timber, if this be possible, also where we can do a little trapping and hunting in the Fall and Winter.

With your general knowledge of conditions, etc., I take it for granted that you could probably give me considerable information such as where you would prefer to homestead, the amount of timber approximately that one might be able to secure with the taking up of the grant, water conditions, etc.

As we of course intend to raise a little cattle also do a little farming, any information you can give me on what kind of truck and crops can be raised where you would suggest we make a trial would help us out considerably."—A. G. R. NERZ, Omaha, Nebr.

*Answer*, by Mr. Harriman:—There is no chance whatever of your finding such a claim as you specify.

This coast has been searched by thousands for the purpose of taking up homesteads, and all available claims have been filed on. Where good timber was not already owned privately, the Forest Service has taken control for conservation.

There seems to be an idea prevalent east of the Rockies that this coast is standing right where it stood forty years ago, in development at least. Let me do what I can to dissipate that idea.

While there are millions of acres in our mountains that are wild and always will be, even ten thousand years hence, yet the States on this coast are highly developed farming country.

To give you an idea of how well developed, I will quote from the reports of our State development board.

These figures represent the production in California alone for the year of 1918.

Resources of our banks first.......$1,021,510,021

PRODUCTION STATISTICS

Fresh fruits—

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Apples | $6,800,000 | |
| Cherries | 1,684,400 | |
| Apricots | 9,457,500 | |
| Figs | 2,700,000 | |
| Peaches | 15,057,600 | |
| Pears | 5,400,000 | |
| Plums | 1,240,000 | |
| | | $42,339,500 |

| | |
|---|---|
| Dried fruit | 13,200,000 |
| Prunes | 5,221,000 |
| Canned fruit and vegetables | 50,000,000 |
| Citrus fruits | 53,487,125 |
| Nuts | 11,040,000 |
| Berries | 6,847,500 |
| Grapes and vineyard products | 77,246,000 |
| Dairy products | 54,430,056 |
| Poultry and eggs | 49,080,000 |
| Honey and wax | 2,400,000 |
| Farm products, such as hay, grain, etc. | 297,969,624 |
| Fish industry | 26,000,000 |
| Forest and lumber products | 45,000,000 |
| Mineral products, including oil | 191,100,000 |
| Livestock and wool | 357,500,000 |
| Nursery and floral products | 4,500,000 |
| Cider and vinegar | 6,000,000 |
| Manufactured products | 852,982,650 |

This, my dear sir, is what one State produced. Never think that a State that can make such a record would allow such a perfect snap as you aspire to to lie idle. The entire coast is teeming with men who would be delighted to find such a chance. I am afraid you will never find what you crave out here.

# LOST TRAILS

Note—We offer this department of the "Camp-Fire" free of charge to those of our readers who wish to get in touch again with old friends or acquaintances from whom the years have separated them. For the benefit of the friend you seek, *give your own name if possible.* All inquiries along this line, unless containing contrary instruotions, will be considered as intended for publication in full with inquirer's name, in this department, at our discretion. We reserve the right in case inquirer refuses his name, to substitute any numbers or other names, to reject any item that seems to us unsuitable, and to use our discretion in all matters pertaining to this department. Give also your own full address. We will, however, forward mail through this office, assuming no responsibility therefor. We have arranged with the Montreal *Star* to give additional publication in their "Missing Relative Column," weekly and daily editions, to any of our inquiries for persons last heard of in Canada. Except in case of relatives, inquiries from one sex to the other are barred.

HILSWICK, HAL. Anderson, Curly: Moore, Howard: Moore, Overall: If any of you see this please write to your friend Rhody who worked with you down in Post Exchange 3, at Camp Stanley, Leon Springs, Texas, during March and April of 1918. Wrote to Hal at Houston address, but received no reply.—Address Frank Boschetty "Rhody" 58½ Gesler St., Providence, Rhode Island.

**Inquiries will be printed three times, then taken out. In the first February issue all unfound names asked for during the past two years will be reprinted alphabetically.**

ARNSTEIN, JOSEPH. Last heard of in 19th Inf. Co. F., stationed at Ft. Crockett, Texas, 1915. Has since been discharged, and joined Marines. His mother is very anxious to learn his whereabouts. Any information regarding him please address to—E. Gruner, City Planing Mills, Dallas, Texas.

KENNEDY, JAMES T. Write to your old shipmate of the *Pocahontas*. Remember our S. A. trip.—Address R. L. Cutes, Coldwater, Kansas.

LAWIEN, WM. J. Of the U. S. A. Base Hos. 22. Please write to—Sergeant John Kramer, P. O. Box 911, Sioux Falls, S. Dak.

CAMPBELL, M. V. s. 93-96 Harvard College. Please write.—E. H. Wells, 150 Nassau St., New York, N. Y.

**Please notify us at once when you have found your man.**

A.—26 INF. 1913-14-15. Would like to hear from any of the old gang. Byrd W. Penrod, Wm. Radswapper McGill, Harry Dryer, Dusk Pamplum or Chris Dato Mahan. Pamplum or Chris last heard of in 4th Inf. Bainbridge, Roger J. Known as Red or Fiddling Red, as he was my buddy. Went over as member of Band, 26th Inf. Came from Okla. City, Okla., or near there.

Would be glad to hear from any of the old layout, or ones that remember me in T. C. or lower Rio Valley.—Address Walter C. McNamee, 92 Franklin St., Keene, N. Hampshire.

**Please notify us at once when you have found your man.**

MALONEY, JANE. Last heard of in Montreal, Canada, 1909. Came from St. Mary's School, Croydon, England, to Canada in 1902. Also her brother James and sister Mrs. Mary Tate, children of Lawrence M. of Liverpool, England. Any information please address.—L. T., 404 care of *Adventure.*

BICKFORD, P. Served in France with C2. Formerly of Springfield. Any information concerning him please write to—E. S. Ellison, Blythe, California.

**Please notify us at once when you have found your man.**

FISHMAN, MRS. ROSE or daughters Elizabeth and Fannie, age now about twenty-three and fourteen or son now about twenty-seven, please communicate with her son Harry. Mother and father separated sometime in 1907; mother taking the two girls and father taking the three boys. Later Abraham disappeared in 1910, and has never been heard from. It is thought he returned to mother. Harry and Louis now about twenty-two and eighteen were put in an orphan asylum and lost all trace of mother and sisters. Harry later disappeared in 1911, and in 1917 found dad and Louis and is now trying to find rest of the family. Any one having any information concerning them please write.—Harry Fishman, 5937 Christian St., Phila., Pa.

HOEY, PAT. Last heard of in Toronto, in Spring of 1918. Information regarding him would be appreciated by an old pal.—Address Marvin Buell, Camrose, Alta.

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SHAW, CORP. A. W. Formerly of U. S. A. Gen. Hosp. 25, and other members of same organization, please write to—Sergeant John Kramer, P. O. Box 911, Sioux Falls, S. Dak.

WALKER, RUPERT. Last heard of in Stroudsburg, Pa. Four years ago. Any one knowing his present whereabouts please notify his mother.—Address Amanda Walker, Rancocas, New Jersey.

ELDER, ALVIN W. (Slivers) Sixteen years old, five feet eleven inches, one hundred and forty pounds, medium light complexion. Everything all right at home, Eugene up to the 6th of April. I'm all right. Write giving your address, so we can send you good news. We will leave for G. P. middle of July. Long to see you.—Address Mrs. Daisy I. Elder, Box 28, Brookings, Curry Co., Oregon.

SIMPSON, MILES. (Bricklayer). Last heard of in New Glasgow, Nova Scotia, 1907. About six feet tall, curly hair, dark complexion. Any information regarding his present whereabouts will be appreciated.—Address George E. Weir, 30 No. Marguerita Ave., Alhambra, Cal.

KLUBERTANZ, CAPTAIN FERDINAND A. Of Rochester Police Department. Mysteriously disappeared on Thursday evening, February 26, 1920. Last seen in Lockport, N. Y., at corner of Main and Locust Sts., where he alighted from a B. L. & R. trolley-car. He is fifty-nine years, five feet eight inches, 220 pounds, gray hair, dark-gray eyes, gray mustache. Wore a black derby hat, black overcoat, dark suit, tan kid gloves. His hat and shirt were marked F. A. K. Walks in a slow, deliberate manner, is temperate in habits, and is undoubtedly temporarily demented. A reward of $100 for information as to his whereabouts will be paid. If found, detain and wire.—Address J. M. Quigley, Chief of Police, Rochester, N. Y.

**Please notify us at once when you have found your man.**

COFFMAN, ELMER EARLE. Auto and radiator repairman; also sheet-metal worker. Sandy hair, slight bald spot, weight 175 pounds, height five feet eight and one-half inches, gray eyes. Carried black walrus grip; wore soft dark-blue hat, dark overcoat with beaver collar, broad-toe shoes. Wandered away while convalescing after an accident. Thought to be a victim of amnesia. May have changed name. Wife very ill. Canadian papers please copy. Reward for any definite information. Earle dear, please come home. Wire me at once. Everything all right now.—Address Mrs. E. Earle Coffman, Suite 3, 5808 Superior Ave., Cleveland, Ohio.

U. S. S. *John Collins*. Crew of. Ensigns C. and K. Langevine, Powers, Kraft, Perkins and the rest of the crew when she was put out of commission. Your former skipper would be glad to hear from you all once in a while.—Address F. Oliver Goldsmith, 507 West St., cor. Jane, New York City.

"TOLEDO SLIM." Am where I said I'd be, and waiting. All set. Why don't you write?—"Nebr Slim."

STEVENSON, ALEX. Five feet seven inches, slim, dark. Born in Scotland. Speaks Spanish. Was a machinist, prospector, showman. Ran Comm. Service Bureau in Hartford, Conn., in 1916. Holds Br. Marine Eng. papers.—Address L. T., No. 399, care of *Adventure*.

POWERS, JIM. Who worked in the Tampa Bay Hotel at Tampa, Fla., during the Season of 1913-1914, and crossed to New Orleans with me in the spring of 1914, but was lost in crowd when landing. Any information will be appreciated.—Address M. P. Mobley, 1315 California St., El Paso, Texas.

**Please notify us at once when you have found your man.**

BUCHANAN, CHARLES: (Arkwright). Last heard of while traveling through Arizona, December 19, 1914. He may be using name of Charles Arkwright. He is forty years old, five feet four, about 130 pounds, light brown hair, brown eyes, habitually smooth-shaven. Any one knowing his whereabouts please communicate with his mother.—Mrs. Anna P. Buchanan, care of Howard Buchanan, 19 Center Market, Newark, N. J.

BATEMAN, LUKE. Born in England, went West in gold rush about 1850. Last heard of as prospector in Oregon about 15 or 20 years ago. Any one knowing his whereabouts please write.—L. T. 402, care of *Adventure*.

BROWNELL, HERMAN A. Between fifty and sixty; had drug business on Reade Street, New York about twenty years ago. Disappeared. Information wanted of him, if living, of his wife or family if he is dead. Important.—Address A. L. McAdam, Rome, New York.

CO. D. 7TH. INFANTRY. Members who were in Galveston Flood, 1915, communicate with Bernard Rosman, Walter Reed Gen. Hospital, Ward 89, Washington, D. C.

KEITH, WILLIAM. Of Aberdeenshire, Scotland. Last heard of was in Cape of Good Hope District, South Africa, in partnership with Frederick William Harding, on a coffee or sugar plantation about twenty-seven or twenty-eight years ago. Any information will be appreciated by his daughter.—Address June Sherwood, Gen. Del., Syracuse, N. Y.

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LT. ROB, P. P. C. L. I. "Paddy" Diamond, who by the way was a one-eyed man who fooled them all for some time and was also an Ex-U. S. Army man of some fifteen or twenty years' service. Also would like to hear from any U. S. 2nd Batt. 27th or 28th Reg't of Inf., men who know the particulars of Major Rasmussenn's death. This major was transferred to the American forces from the P. P. C. L. I.—Address L. T. 403, care of *Adventure*.

BRACKETT, EVERETT W. (Son). Missing since Dec. 19, 1919. Last heard of at Athens, La. Wrote mother he was leaving there and has never been heard of since. Any one knowing his whereabouts please write.—Mrs. Emma Brackett, Troy Sta., Gastomia, N. C.

YISKIS, JOHNNIE. Last heard of in Stillwell, on a farm. Age fourteen years, height about five feet, two inches, gray eyes, blond hair. Any one knowing his whereabouts please communicate with—Willie Bevick, care of Gen. Del., Bay Point, Cal.

**Please notify us at once when you have found your man.**

COLE, MR. and MRS. Last heard of in Havana, Cuba, about eight years ago. Lived in Chester Hall Apartments, Westchester Ave., cor. Southern Blvd., Bronx, New York. Any information concerning them will be appreciated.—Address Mrs. Jurin, 1876 Arthur Ave., Bronx, N. Y.

WESTERNER Ahoy! Would like to communicate with any of my old shipmates, for old times' sake. "Red" Thomas, Portland, Oregon. I tried to locate you by mail but didn't succeed. Drop me a line, Jesse Richardson; where are you now? Let's hear from you, Rich.—Address George H. Craine, Cartier, Canada, care of C. P. R.

DOOLEY, VINCENT DE PAUL. Of Brooklyn, N. Y. One time a student, Villanova College, Villanova, Pa. Lived in Boro' Park, Brooklyn. Last heard of at a college either in Baltimore, Maryland or Washington, D. C. Studied to be a lawyer and since admitted to the bar. Any information will be appreciated.—Address L. T., No. 401, care of *Adventure.*

**Please notify us at once when you have found your man.**

WEBB, JOHN. Was Naval Reserve Guard at Clyde Line Piers, in Jacksonville, Florida, during summer of 1918. Met him there during that period while I was quartermaster on the *Mohawk.* He later corresponded with me, using my Roselle, New Jersey, address. Last news from him received August, 1918. Where are you, old Sea Scout; what has become of you? If you read this you will surely recall Burt Boell from Jersey. Remember your old "gangway-watch," pal? Well, that's me. Let me hear from you, matie.—Address BURTUS POWELL BOELL, Q. M., Gen. Del., Hartford, Conn.

**THE following have been inquired for in full in either the Mid-July or First August issues of Adventure. They can get the name of the inquirer from this magazine:**

BERGMAN, Fred; Burdick, Daniel Henry; Cain, Lyle; Canfield, Russell H.; Carpenter; Coghill, Ion D.; Copkley, Clarence L.; Davidson, Frank Leslie; Dieterick, Martin M.; Doyle, Michael; Dyhsma, Bartles; Francis, J. F.; Heffernan, Otto A.; Hooper, Wm. H.; Howell, Ed.; Hylaman, Joe; Johnson, J.; (L. A. S.) Keller, Byron, Loring; Kircher, Hugo H.; Larity, Albert; Lee, Delbert E.; Light, Daniel F.; Manman, Mrs. Al or Lenna; Maxwell, Howard S.; Murphy, Dan; Rains, Mrs. Dave; Ray, James Richard; Ringenburg, Lester; Roberts, Ora Frank; Van Tilburg, Frank; Whitney, Earl.

MISCELLANEOUS: U. S. S. *John Collins* crew of Ensigns: Charles Rogers; Earl MacIntyre; Lionel Darrow; C. M. Hannah; E. B. Hess.

**MANUSCRIPTS UNCLAIMED**

HASTLAR GAL BREATH: Ruth Gilfillan; Jack P. Robinson; Ray Ozmer; Miss Jimmie Banks; O. B. Franklin; Lieutenant Wm. S. Hilles; G. H. Bennett; Byron Chisholm; A. B. Paradis; E. E. S. Atkins; G. E. Hungerford; A. Gaylord; E. J. Moran; F. S. Emerson; E. Murphy; J. Dunn; J. Higmon; L. E. Patten; T. T. Bennett; Sinn Cardie; J. E. Warner.

**UNCLAIMED mail is held by Adventure for the following persons, who may obtain it by sending us present address and proof of identity:**

BEATON, SGT. MAJOR G. M.: Benson, Edwin Worth; Bentsch, Elizabeth; Bonner, Major J. S.; Mrs. Brownell; Carpenter, Capt. Robert S.; "Chink" Colesby; Cook, Bob, Cook, Elliot D.; Cook, William N.; Cosby, Arthur F.; Crashley, Wm. T.; Eager, Paul Roman; Erwin, Phil; Fairfax, Boyd; Fisher, Edward E.; Fisher, Sgt. R.; Garson, Ed.; Gordon, W. A.; Green, Billy; Green, W.; Hale, Robert E.; Harris, Walter J.; Hart, Jack; Harwood, J.; Hoffman. J. M.; Hughes, Frank E.; Hunt, Daniel O'Connell; Jackson, Robert R.; Kohlhammer, Jack; Kuckaby, William Francis; Kuhn, Edward; Kutcher, Sgt. Harry; Lafler, Mrs. Harry; Lancaster, C. E.; Larisey, Jock; Lauder, Harry; Lee, Dr. C.; Lee, Capt. Harry, A. R. C.; Lee, Dr. William R.; Lewis, Warburton; "Lonely Jack"; Lovett, Harold S.; McAdams, W. B.; McGrath, Jack W. MacDonald, Tony; MacNamee, Alva I.; Madsen, Sgt. E. E.; Martel, Leon H.; Nelson, Frank Lovell: O'Hara, Jack; Parker, G. A.; Parker, Dr. M.; Parrott, Pvt. D. C.; Philips, Corbett, C.; Rich, Wagoner Bob; Rinkenback, Frank; Rundle, Merrill G.; Schmidt, G.; Scott, Pvt. James F.; Stremple. H. E.; Swan, George L.; Tripp, Edward N.; Van Tyler, Chester; Von Gelucke, Byron; Ward, Frank B.; Wheeler S. H.; Williams, W. P.; Zorek, Leon; J. C. H.; L. T. 348; S. 177284; 439; WS-XV.

PLEASE send us your present address. Letters forwarded to you at address given us do not reach you.—Address L. B. BARRETTO, care of *Adventure.*

# THE TRAIL AHEAD

## FIRST SEPTEMBER ISSUE

**Besides the complete book-length novel described on the second page, you will find these nine stories in the next issue:**

**THE FOURTH BOY** — *By Charles Brown, Jr.*
The loyalty of this one-armed Kanaka kid meets with a reward which loyalty does not always receive.

**L'ATLANTIDE Conclusion** — *By Pierre Benoit*
In which an escape is attempted from *Antinea's* castle in the desert.

**THE GONG-BEATER** — *By Roy P. Churchill*
*Seaman Jones* finds sky-pilots, politicians and bull-pups a tough combination.

**IN THE MAW OF THE ICE*** — *By Theodore Seixas Solomons*
It's hard for even an Alaskan sourdough to keep his presence of mind when the ice closes over him. *An Off-the-Trail Story.

**THICKER THAN WATER** — *By L. Patrick Greene*
Half black and half white—a fifty-fifty story of South Africa.

**THE TRAILS OF SILENCE** — *By Robert J. Horton*
"The Finlander's been killed," went up the cry; and *Boyer* goes on a man-hunt of a sort that was new to the little mountain community.

**THE DEVIL IN CHAINS** — *By Farnham Bishop*
It is a fearful engine that "*El Aleman*" puts together to defend this beleagured town in Mexico.

**KINGS OF THE MISSOURI Part III** — *By Hugh Pendexter*
*Bridger's* Rocky Mountain Men meet the Indians at the great rendezvous in Wyoming and prepare for battle against their rivals.

**"THEES EES THE *HOMBRE*"** — *By Romaine H. Lowdermilk*
The passion for revenge clashes with the Mexican passion for the dramatic, and *Tink Parlow* is the innocent bystander who gets in the way.

AUGUST
18th
1920
25c

PUBLISHED
TWICE A MONTH

# Adventure

Pierre Benoit
Samuel Alexander White
L. J. Montross
Hugh Pendexter
E. S. Pladwell
W. C. Tuttle
R. de S. Horn
Arthur O. Friel
Robert J. Pearsall
George J. Cotton